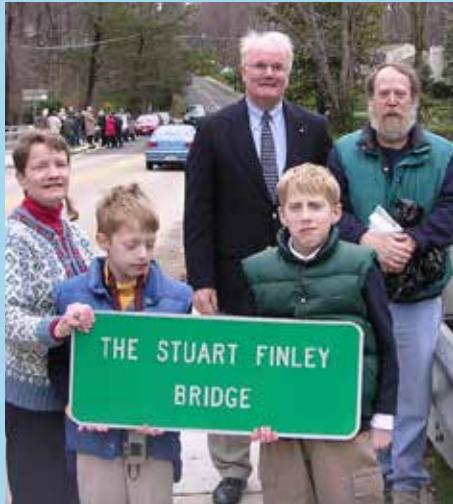
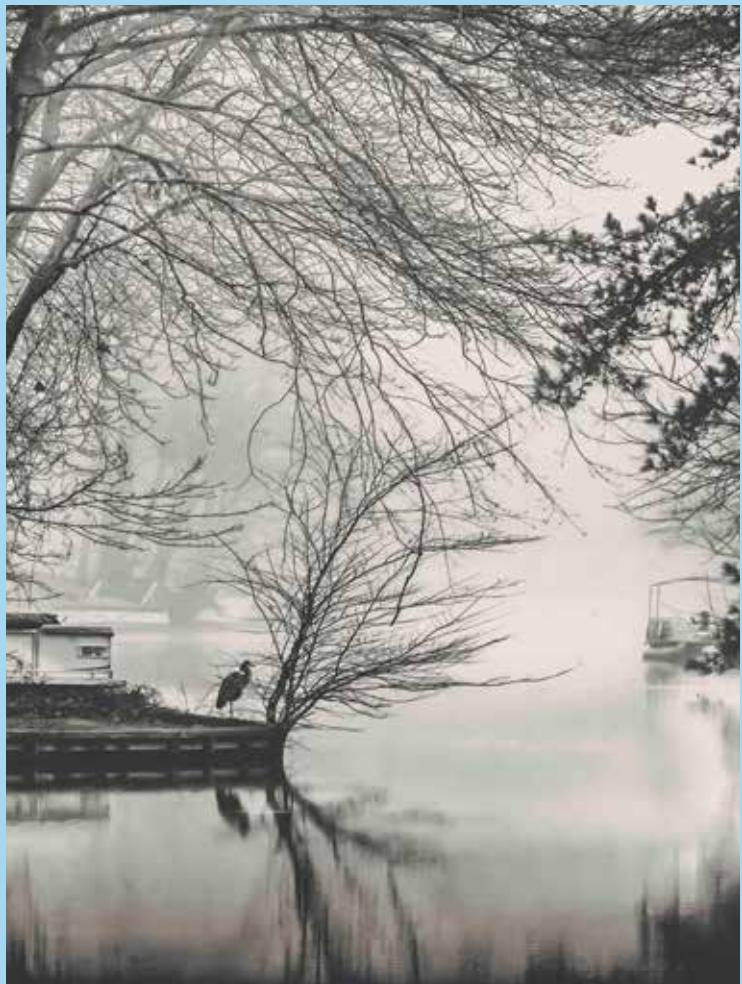




# Lake Barcroft

1950 to 2025







2022

LARRY GOLFER

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>1. LBA</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2. LBWID</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>3. Groups</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>4. Lakewide Events</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>5. Environment</b> .....	<b>26</b>
5A. Wildlife Guide: Healthy Critters, Healthy Lake.....	32
5B. Wildlife Guide: Birds of Lake Barcroft .....	39
5C. Wildlife Guide: Mammals of Lake Barcroft .....	43
<b>6. Newsworthy Events</b> .....	<b>47</b>
<b>7. Lake Barcroft Real Estate</b> .....	<b>53</b>
How we found our house.....	55
<b>8. Staff</b> .....	<b>57</b>
<b>9. Lake Barcroft's Exceptional Volunteers</b> .....	<b>62</b>
<b>10. Donors</b> .....	<b>66</b>
<b>11. Authors and Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>68</b>
<b>12. The First 50 Years</b> (A reprint of the original History of Lake Barcroft) .....	<b>70</b>

*Front cover and back cover photos, 2010, by Larry Golfer.*

Copyright: © Lake Barcroft Association 2025  
PDF versions are on [lakebarcroft.org](http://lakebarcroft.org)

Design by Red Velvet Creative, Selena Robleto  
Printing by McCabe Printing, Alexandria, VA



2015—Beach days have been making family memories for 75 years.

LARRY GOLFER

# Lake Barcroft: First Quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Tony Bracken's wonderful *Lake Barcroft History* told the story of the first 50 years of Lake Barcroft's community development, from the very beginnings of our community in 1950 to the year 2000. Unsurprisingly, the last 25 years have seen far less dramatic change and growth than our first 50. Necessarily, a more seasoned community continues to improve, building on our history, but not "reinventing the wheel." But even with less drama and change, our Lake continues to be a suburban paradise and "the best kept secret in Washington."

*Lake Barcroft History 2000–2025* brings our history up to date in these sections:

**LBA.** By 2000, the revised structure of our community governance was in place — the Lake Barcroft Association (LBA), a Virginia homeowners' association, and the Lake Barcroft Watershed Improvement District (LBWID), a state-approved governmental entity, were already operating much as they do today. Many of our existing social and charitable groups were active. Swimming, boating and other Lake activities were widely enjoyed as they are today. Almost all the lots in the community included constructed, occupied homes.

The LBA continues to be the foundation of our community. It handles maintenance and upgrades of LBA real estate. It promulgates and enforces our covenants and our rules for the use of the Lake and beaches. It hires the lifeguards and Water Safety team. It provides a vehicle for the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship. It supports many social activities. In the last 25 years, in addition to annual printed directories, it has started and supported LakeLink (the neighborhood listserv), the community website, and an online directory.

We'll examine what the LBA does and problems the LBA has faced — and solved — in the first quarter of the 21st Century. And we'll look at some recurring issues that often require continued LBA focus.

**LBWID.** Our Lake Barcroft Watershed Improvement District has been very active during the last 25 years and has provided extensive, critical services to the community. This update will discuss the significant improvements to the dam and expanded LBWID activities. It will also explore important issues faced by the LBWID, and the increased cooperation between the LBWID and the LBA — including substantial dam upgrades and regulatory matters. It will cover the transfer of title of the dam as well as the dam service area from the LBA to the LBWID.

**Groups.** We are blessed by our many community organizations, both continuing and new. This update will provide information about the older ones and describe the activities of the groups formed after 2000 as well as community events sponsored by LBA and other organizations.

**Events.** A listing of annual community-wide events.

**Environment.** The last 25 years have seen a growing emphasis on protecting and improving our environment — and we will discuss some of these efforts and highlight the fish, water life, birds and mammals of Lake Barcroft.

**Newsworthy Events.** This update will also explore happenings of community interest: six tragic drownings, the Derecho storm, the Covid pandemic, and the rabid beaver incident among them.

**Real Estate.** Other key developments in the community include the significant changes to many of the properties within the Lake Barcroft boundaries. Some of the original homes have been razed to make way for new ones. Many of the original homes have been substantially renovated. For the first time in LBA history, all 1,045 private lots have houses. And the values of our homes have skyrocketed over the last two decades. Very few of the original owners are left, although some second and third generation family members have stayed on or returned. This update will have stories from old timers and newer residents talking about how they happened to come to Lake Barcroft.

**Staff.** Discover the stories of four remarkable LBA and LBWID employees who have made extraordinary contributions to life at Lake Barcroft during this century and before.

**Honors.** The final section will focus on some of the remarkable community leaders and volunteers who have selflessly served the Lake community over many years.

It all paints a picture of a vigorous neighborhood with outstanding neighbors working together to make Lake Barcroft a marvelous place to call home.

*Please note: This update was written before the excellent decision to re-publish the 1950-2000 Bracken history of the Lake as the second section of this merged publication. Throughout this update there are references to areas covered by the earlier history. Some information in this update is included in the hope that it will be of particular interest to newcomers who may be largely unfamiliar with our community's history, governance, activities, and organizations.*

# 1. The Lake Barcroft Association (LBA)

Our homeowners' association, the LBA, continues to be critical to the management of our community in a myriad of ways, all designed to maintain and improve the quality of life for Lake residents. The LBA:

- Owns, maintains, supervises, and insures the five beaches; the peninsulas at Beach 3 and Beach 5; a portion of the Woman's Club Garden; the Aqua Terrace entry garden off Columbia Pike; the Lakebed and Lake, the "common properties."
- Maximizes the safety and convenience of the community in the recreational use of the Lake and common LBA properties by promulgating appropriate rules (with significant community input) and enforcing them through its employees and volunteers and, as needed, the local police. All these rules are available on the LBA website.
- Enforces the covenants to which all Lake properties are subject, as set out in our deeds and pursuant to the relevant Virginia statutes for homeowner associations, and the rules promulgated (with significant community input) to guide compliance with the covenants. All these rules are also available on the LBA website.
- Directs and funds a series of programs designed to protect and enhance the Lake Barcroft environment.
- Organizes (or cooperates in organizing) events for the community.
- Works with the Mason District Supervisor and Fairfax County and Virginia officials on public policy issues that affect our community.
- Through the Lake Barcroft Foundation, Inc., supports scholarships for Justice High School students.



2022—What do little kids like best? Digging in the sand and building castles with big moats.

## LBA Governance

The LBA is governed by a 13-member Board of Directors elected by the LBA members (all Lake households), for two-year terms, with a consecutive three-term limit. Each year there are nominations for new directors to fill expiring terms. Members are encouraged to apply for nomination through the LBA website, frequent LakeLink messages, LBA Newsletter outreach, and word-of-mouth.

The LBA Nominating Committee is responsible for the final slate of candidates — three more than the number of expiring terms, as required by the LBA by-laws. The names and their biographical materials are circulated to the membership for its vote (directly or by proxy) at the February Annual Meeting. During the Covid pandemic, Zoom meetings were added, as was easier voting in advance of the Annual meeting.

The LBA President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary are elected by the Board at its March meeting, and Committee chairs/co-chairs are named. The Board normally has these committees: Membership, Finance and Audit, Legal, Water Safety, Communications, Environmental Quality, Maintenance and Improvements, Architectural Review, and Special Events. As needed, the Board creates ad hoc committees to deal with specific issues.

(Names of all current and past Board members, current officers, and committee chairs are available on the LBA website, which also includes copies of governing documents.)

The LBA maintains its books and records, secures insurance coverage, collects dues, pays bills — and otherwise conducts its day-to-day management through volunteers working with a paid manager. Comprehensive efforts are made to keep the community aware of its work and the various issues that arise through the online and printed Newsletter (run by a paid editor, volunteers, and a paid layout person); LakeLink, the popular neighbor-to-neighbor listserv; and a comprehensive webpage, which is regularly updated by volunteers.

## The Architectural Review Committee

One of the core activities of the LBA is enforcing the covenants in our property deeds. The critical provision of the covenants assigns to the LBA, as successor to the original developers, the obligation to formally approve in advance any proposed erection or renovation of “any building, fence or other structure” proposed in the community. Moreover, according

to Virginia law, the LBA has the power to establish, adopt, and enforce rules and regulations assigned to it by the covenants.

Under the latest iteration of the ARC rules, residents who propose any “building, fence or other structure” on their property should preserve the natural beauty of the area and provide for appropriate landscaping, harmony of design, color, and location in relation to surrounding structures, and use of invisible fencing for dog control.

The rules, available to the community through the LBA website, cover fencing limitations, paving, harsh lighting affecting other properties, use of inharmonious colors, structures blocking neighbors’ light and air, and Lakefront structures other than seawalls and docks. There are separate guidelines pertaining to construction or renovation of seawalls and docks as those directly impact LBWID-managed and LBA-owned areas. Rarely, a need for an exception to these rules may arise, and the ARC will seriously consider a request for a waiver.

ARC rules require that applicants advise neighbors of the proposed work and receive written confirmation that the neighbors have seen the plans being submitted. The neighbors may comment directly to the applicant. They may also submit comments to the ARC. The ARC will consider neighbors’ submissions, but they are not determinative. Comments to the applicant are expected within five days of the neighbor’s receipt of the plans.

Over the years the community has overwhelmingly respected the ARC rules and the covenant limitations, in large part because they are so reasonable and good for the community — and because the vast majority of the residents want to be cooperative and enjoy a well-maintained, good-looking neighborhood. The community knows that ARC members work with landowners and neighbors to achieve their objectives consistent with the rules and taking neighbors’ interests into consideration.

Serious confrontations are rare, but any applicant dissatisfied with the ARC determination can seek Board review. The Board has seldom overruled the ARC.

The form for an application to the ARC is available on the LBA website and must include a written description of what is planned, photographs of the area impacted by the proposed project, a plat showing the proposed project and any contractor plans. For large renovations or new construction, a topographic map (if drainage is an issue) and elevations are also normally submitted.

The ARC nearly always responds within 30 days of receipt of the application and often, where an application is complete and straightforward, within two weeks.

If the applicant wishes to construct or renovate a seawall or dock, which generally means on LBA property (the Lake and Lakebed), there are special requirements. The application must be submitted to the LBA/ARC, as well as to the LBWID in case of possible interference with LBWID operations. Rules for seawalls and docks require regular LBWID inspection of the construction project on an ongoing basis.

The job of the ARC committee members, all volunteers, is time-consuming, detailed, and can be very difficult — and in rare cases, contentious. But nonetheless, over the years, the ARC has worked diligently and intensively to protect and preserve our community. These special volunteers deserve our cooperation and respect. We are all deeply benefited by their dedication.

## Water Safety

One of the most important LBA responsibilities is ensuring that the Lake is as safe as possible for swimmers, boaters, fishing folks, ice skaters and those of us who just like to enjoy the Lake. The LBA has published boating rules as well as rules for the use of the Lake and the beaches, on the LBA website, the Directory, and annually in the Newsletter. (Each Lake resident is responsible for being aware of and following these rules.)

The major responsibility for enforcing these critical safety rules is in the hands of the professional Water Safety Supervisor. Since May 1992 (with a short interruption), our WSS has been the indomitable Kevin Hardy, a Lake native. Kevin began as a lifeguard in 1987. He trains, guides, deploys and supervises a staff of approximately 30 lifeguards, including



2004—Kevin Hardy has been on the job since 1987.



TOM DONLAN

2006—Water Safety training starts early with the annual swim lessons. Younger ones start with “noodles.”

qualified substitutes, with the able assistance of a Deputy Water Safety Supervisor, presently his daughter, Grace Hardy.

Lifeguards are assigned daily to all five beaches from just before Memorial Day to Labor Day, normally from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. at most beaches. A duty manager is assigned to patrol the Lake and its common properties from an hour before opening to an hour after closing and helps ensure the smooth operations of each beach. There is no lifeguard coverage for beaches during off-hours or before and after the open beach season. Occasionally, back-to-college schedules cause a lifeguard shortage and swimming is prohibited at Beach Five and sometimes at Beach One. Notice of these staff shortages is posted on LakeLink and the website.

Besides their primary role — recognizing, preventing, and responding to potential emergencies in the water and around the common properties — lifeguards generally enforce the rules for swimming and property use. They check beach tags to discourage trespassers. Their work relies on the friendly cooperation of Lake residents. It is important in securing the private nature of our Lake that we all carry our beach tags and show them to lifeguards upon entry to the common properties.

Through most of the last 25 years the LBA has supported a series of swimming lessons provided by experienced swimming teachers, for swimming levels from beginner to junior lifesaving. The junior lifesaving program is now in its 8th season and has been a very successful pipeline for future Lake lifeguards, many of whom graduated from the program. Both

Lake youngsters and resident-sponsored youngsters ages 10 - 14 are eligible for this excellent program, which also introduces potential lifeguards to local fire, EMS, police and county marine services, as well as advanced first aid and CPR skills.

Additionally, there have been other similar offerings from time to time—classes in sailing, Stand Up Paddleboarding, kayaking, pontoon safety, senior lifesaving, etc.

The Lake community has had a good safety record since its founding, but it is our responsibility to make sure that we support this sterling record by following the rules and respecting the lifeguards as water safety professionals—and by teaching our kids to swim and safely enjoy the wonders of our precious Lake.

## Communications

LBA took advantage of the significant improvements in on-line communications since 2000 to expand its outreach to the Lake community through the website and LakeLink.

Our neighborhood listserv, LakeLink, was created by the LBA shortly after 2000, at the urging of George November, who provided the early hosting free of charge. It's become the daily go-to for Lake issues, recommendations, giveaways, power outages, trees down warnings, wildlife sightings/questions, scenic photos, death announcements, and updates on former residents — and that's just part of it. LakeLink has become a major factor in our strong sense of community — as well as a marketplace for ideas and “stuff” of all kinds.

From time to time, the LBA sends residence-wide email for special occasions or emergencies to those who have signed up for them.

**Website.** The LBA website, [www.lakebarcroft.org](http://www.lakebarcroft.org) was substantially expanded over the last 25 years. It's an invaluable resource for the community and includes a trove of critical information and documents including our governing documents, rules, LBA board meeting minutes, relevant forms, current and back copies of newsletters, a contractors list, seasonal beach and Lake conditions, etc. If you have a question about the LBA and need guidance, the LBA website is the place to start.

**Newsletter.** The LBA also publishes a monthly Newsletter, emailed to every household, with a print edition sent to those who request it. It is also available on the LBA website and through LakeLink with articles about the Lake, its residents, gardening advice, photos, news of the Lake organizations,

schedules of events, LBA/LBWID information, news of the local schools, etc.

**Directory.** The LBA also publishes and distributes to all residents the biennial Lake Barcroft Directory, an invaluable reference for information, including residents' names (alphabetically and by section), addresses and contact information, and maps (by section, lot number and addresses). The Directory also includes many Lake documents, rules, and application forms.

Our lifeguards use Facebook, X, and Instagram to promote water safety, highlight staff, and share seasonal beach conditions.

Although not sponsored by the LBA, there are also several Facebook groups with a Lake Barcroft focus and many of the Lake organizations have their own websites.

## Maintenance Highlights

A critical feature of the work of the LBA is maintaining, restoring, and protecting the many common Lake areas. This large chore involves not only paid maintenance workers but also many hours of hard work by volunteers in beach clean-ups, weeding, pulling invasive plants, repairing structures, planting trees, replacing/repairing our unique street signs and other enhancements.

In the last 25 years, LBA has upgraded the pedestrian bridge from Lakeview Drive to the Woman's Club Garden, which connects to Dearborn Drive. This major upgrade in 2011, was designed by volunteer Luis Fernandez and supervised by then Maintenance Committee Chair George Waters. Approximately 20 volunteer carpenters worked to replace the railings and most of the decking.



TOM DONLAN

**2004—**Maintenance never stops at the beaches. There's always something to fix, to improve, or just to paint.



LARRY GOLFER

**2019**—Opening Day at the new Beach 3 Playground, put together through the hard work of parents and the support of donors and the LBA.

Another Woman's Club Garden project removed a water feature, built new pathways and installed new plantings. The Garden itself was substantially improved with an extensive clean-up and new plantings.

Two sets of steps crossing the Lakeview Drive median were given sturdy railings and landings.

The beaches also received attention beyond clean-up and routine maintenance. Volunteer carpenters built new boat racks at every beach; new grills were installed. Major water erosion issues at Beaches 4 and 2 were largely solved by a significantly improved parking lot and drainage system at Beach 4 and a new driveway and drainage system at Beach 2, both joint LBA/LBWID projects. Lifeguard stands and picnic tables were upgraded at most beaches. Signage was expanded and porta-potties and dog walk bag dispensers were installed at all beaches and on both ends of the Woman's Club Garden. Lifeguard huts were built at Beaches 2, 3, and 4. At Beach 3, LBWID installed an aquatic handrail, which goes well out into the water, to give better Lake access to seniors and handicapped residents.

Children's play areas were improved and re-built. A parents' group raised funds and built a new swing set at Beach 2. An old, dilapidated swing set at Beach 1 was replaced. A group interested in a new playground at Beach 3 secured donations from community members and local businesses, as well as a contribution from LBA to give us the beautiful playground at Beach 3.

## **The Lake Barcroft Foundation, Inc. and the Thurgood Marshall Fund**

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall moved to Lake Barcroft in 1968 and was its most distinguished resident at the time of his death in 1993. Within five years of Justice

Marshall's death, resident Ralph Smalley formed a committee to create a general legacy to honor him. The original committee quickly agreed to create a scholarship for deserving students from our local public high school (then JEB Stuart High School, now Justice High School). Ralph chaired the Thurgood Marshall Fund from its inception until his "retirement" in 2020, when Carol "Kari" Kelley succeeded him. The Fund committee consists of eight Lake residents nominated by the existing committee members when a vacancy occurs.

To manage gifts made to the Fund, which had previously been handled by Fairfax County, the Scholarship Fund began accepting donations via the Lake Barcroft Foundation. Donations are tax-deductible. The LBA Board Executive Committee is the Foundation's governing body. The Foundation relies on the Fund committee for all operational decisions.

The Fund raises gifts exclusively from the Lake Barcroft community, primarily by inviting tax deductible donations in our annual dues letter. We can contribute when we pay our dues. The Fund regularly highlights information about its activities and its beneficiaries in the LBA Newsletter. It also uses the Newsletter to solicit donations to the Foundation, for the Fund, from individual members and Lake organizations such as the Lake Barcroft Woman's Club.

The Fund maintains a basic endowment amount of \$100,000 to ensure a source of interest and dividends so that the scholarship program will continue and Justice Marshall will be memorialized in perpetuity. Contributions are always distributed in the year they were donated.

The Fund committee annually reviews all student applicant submissions, including data from Justice High School covering grades, family information, lists of colleges and universities that have accepted each applicant, and other financial resources available to the applicant.

Applicants also write essays about their lives and often challenging experiences, as well as their academic achievements. Some essays include how students' lives reflect Justice Marshall's legacy and inspiration. After many hours of committee meetings and review, the final scholarships are awarded.

From its inception, the Thurgood Marshall Fund, through the Lake Barcroft Foundation, has distributed approximately \$500,000 to about 200 Justice students, thanks to the generosity of the Lake Barcroft community. In recent years amounts per recipient range from \$1,000 to \$3,000.

## Recurring LBA Issues

During the last 25 years — and probably for many of the first 50 — LBA volunteers have spent hundreds of hours on a series of perplexing and recurring issues, many not substantially different from those faced by other suburban areas. A review of LBA Board minutes and Newsletters for the last 25 years reveals most of them:

**Speeding cars and pedestrian safety.** Speeding on our narrow, winding, hilly streets has been the most vexing problem and a continuing focus of the present and past LBA Boards. Committees have formed, community input has been sought, proposals have been made, and meetings have been held with VDOT and with County officials. Yet nothing has substantially changed.

To deal with speeding and pedestrian safety, the State and County created a lengthy and bureaucratic process called the Residential Traffic Administration Program (RTAP).

Numerous control efforts have been undertaken within Lake Barcroft, but ultimately the RTAP program, with the Virginia Department of Transportation paying the tab, ends up offering speed bumps or the less invasive speed tables (such as those installed on Patrick Henry Drive) as solutions. However, the process of securing humps and tables requires buy-in from neighbors adjacent to the hump or table, as well as majority community support. Lake folks who oppose both have thus far prevailed.

At one point in the last 25 years, the County was allowing Homeowner Associations to request stop signs. An ad hoc LBA Traffic Committee sought input from residents for the location of new stop signs. Eight locations were recommended but only four had petitions showing residents' support, so the Board requested, and the County installed, stop signs only at those four locations.

Other alternatives such as adding sidewalks have been considered, but sidewalks are controversial and very expensive. The LBA has also supported extra fines for speeding in certain zones, but these steps have had only modest impact. Nothing else of note has been done that has significantly improved the ongoing traffic and safety problems. Perhaps in the next 25 years.

**Trespassing and vandalism** on LBA common properties have continued to be major security problems — and the subject of regular LBA Board attention over the course of the last 25 years.

In summer months when the beaches are open, our lifeguards have been reasonably effective at keeping out trespassers during beach hours simply by requesting to see beach tags. Problem times have been in the spring before the beaches open, in the fall after they have closed, and during evening hours when there is no lifeguard coverage.

For many years the LBA hired off-duty Fairfax County police officers to patrol common properties, but in recent years few police officers have shown any interest in these jobs. The LBA



**2024**—Justice High School Crew has been doing spring training on the Lake — with a couple breaks — since the 1960s. Boats are onsite, and the team can jog down from the high school and be on the water quickly. The Lake offers a beautiful setting and savings for the team budget. Buses for the long trip to the Occoquan rowing area can cost about \$600 a day. In 2025, the Girls Quad — with Brooke Ehmann-Jones of Whispering Lane — placed first at States and 2nd at Nationals. The Boys Quad placed 2nd at States.



**2006**—Beaches have exploded with boats — mostly kayaks — in the last 25 years. Beach 3 alone now has 252 boats: including canoes and stand-up paddle boards on a growing number of volunteer-built boat racks.

hired private security companies and added staff to patrol our common properties in the evenings. Neighborhood Watch, consisting of several volunteer groups, used to offer some security, but only one group remains. A few years ago, LBA began hiring private security companies and more recently significantly increased the security budget to upgrade and expand security services with the expectation that this will reduce trespassing and other problems.

Less significant, but of strong community interest, are other recurring problems that have received LBA Board focus over the last 25 years:

**Off-leash dogs.** Some residents believe that dogs should be allowed to run free on the Beach 5 peninsula. However, this practice runs contrary to both leashed-dog LBA rules and Fairfax County regulations. Nonetheless, some residents have resisted attempts to enforce the rules against unleashed dogs on LBA property. Within the last five years, unleashed dogs

turned the grass at the Beach 5 peninsula into a mud pit, so additional efforts began to more effectively enforce the rules.

In a similar vein, some residents believe that leashed dogs should be allowed on the beaches during beach season, but most disagree. This runs contrary to a specific LBA rule that prohibits “any pets” on the “sandy areas” of the beaches between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

**Noise complaints** involving late night parties, loud music and loud landscaping equipment have been the subjects of frequent demands that the LBA “DO SOMETHING!” But, unfortunately, except when the decibel levels exceed the fairly high Fairfax County limits or the loud activity takes place between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., in the absence of a noise-limiting homeowner covenant, the Board can only request more neighborly conduct.

# 2. Lake Barcroft Watershed Improvement District

## Governance

The Lake Barcroft Watershed Improvement District (LBWID) was created under Virginia law in 1973, following a referendum of Lake Barcroft homeowners to address the 1972 damage to the dam by Hurricane Agnes, to finance the needed repairs, and to provide for future dam management and Lake environmental maintenance. The LBWID is a political subdivision of the State of Virginia and is operated under the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District (District). All properties in the Lake Barcroft subdivision are within the LBWID's jurisdiction; no other properties are in

the LBWID. Under Virginia law the LBWID, as a political subdivision, can impose taxes on the covered properties to raise funds for its activities

A three-member Board of Trustees administers the LBWID. The Board positions are Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary/Operations Oversight Manager. All Trustees must be Lake Barcroft property owners. Although the Trustees are formally appointed by the District and its supervising agency (the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board), both entities have agreed to appoint Trustees who are recommended by the LBWID and the LBA, acting jointly. Under a 2022 LBWID/



**2014**—Heavy rain causes the dam gate to open, creating a dramatic cascade. But you don't have to slow-drive down Columbia Pike to see what's happening at the dam. The LBWID livestreams at <https://lakebarcroftwid.com/>. Click Dam Cam.



**2018**—In a major renovation, new cylinders were installed at the dam.

LBA agreement, a Trustee's term is five years, but s/he can serve a second term with the approval of the other two Trustees and the President of the LBA. A third term requires the approval of the other two Trustees and both the President and Vice-President of the LBA (or, at the President's discretion, the entire LBA Board).

**Last 25 years:** The LBWID has had only five Board Chairs — Sara-Ann “Sally” Determan (1973-1976), David Alne (1976-2003), Charles “Chuck” deSeve (2003-2016), Alan Pisarski (2016 to 2025), and Brenda Pierce (beginning in September of 2025). During his many years as Chairman, Chuck de Seve contributed substantially to LBWID operations and the modernization of the entire organization. He also focused on the need for dam maintenance and upgrades. He restructured the finance and budgeting process, adding a capital reserve account and adopting a long-range planning model. And, finally, he expanded the LBWID's focus on Lake health, debris removal, maintenance and improvements, and on developing a professional staff.

Since 2000, nine other Lake members have also served as Trustees. The two longest-serving were George McLennan

(2008 - 2023) and Gerald “Jerry” Mendenhall (2010 - 2022). George was the Secretary/Operations Oversight officer, who provided invaluable technical and management counsel. He also proposed solutions that allowed everyone to collaborate. Jerry was Treasurer for all his terms and played a significant role in developing and implementing the LBWID financial investment strategy. He also oversaw financing for three large dam upgrade projects — concrete restoration, hydraulic cylinder replacement, and a catwalk/access platform.

The LBWID staff was originally organized and led by Stuart Finley, whom many consider the “father” of the LBWID. From the earliest days of the formation of the LBWID to his retirement in 2003, Stuart was part of the management team and, after the dam was restored, he was in charge of LBWID administration and operations. The extraordinarily effective Davis Grant is the LBWID's Executive Director and is supported by the LBWID Operations Director (Tim Cogswell), LBWID Office Manager (Jennifer Grant), Dam Manager (Sam Ellis), and other professional staff members. All members of the LBWID staff are listed on the LBWID website, <https://lakebarcroftwid.com>

## Dam Management and Upgrades

In the 30 years following the initial significant post-Agnes dam improvements, the dam structure required minimal restoration and maintenance. However, by 2003, many of the dam control and monitoring systems had aged and required upgrading.

In the last 25 years, there were a series of significant LBWID upgrades. Between 2003 and 2005, the LBWID installed a modern industrial computer control system for managing day-to-day dam operations and providing precise operations data collection. In 2007, the LBWID installed a video camera downstream from the dam, which allows live streaming of the dam face and waterflow through the bascule gate. (Views from the dam camera can be seen on the LBWID website.) In the same year, the LBWID installed a backup electric generator system to power the dam's computer and hydraulic control systems and its buildings and complexes.

Between 2011 and 2013, the LBWID did a complete resurfacing of the downstream face of the dam's east and west abutments, repaired the western retaining wall, and restored the concrete piers on the primary spillway. Between 2014-2015, the LBWID installed a catwalk/access platform across the downstream dam face, which provides a more efficient and safer access to equipment on the face of the dam for staff, engineers, and support contractors. Between 2016 and 2019, the LBWID replaced the four hydraulic cylinders that move the bascule gate up and down. (The replaced cylinders were part of the original 1973 installation.)

## Dam Embankment Armoring Project

Significant work on the dam continued in 2022, when the LBWID began the Dam Embankment Armoring Project to comply with Virginia regulatory requirements, which had been updated in 2008 to reflect modern-day standards for "High Hazard Potential Dams." Our dam is within this category because of the substantial downstream population and structures that could be seriously affected by a dam failure or equivalent catastrophe. High Hazard Potential Dams must have spillways that can safely discharge the peak flow from a Potential Maximum Flood (PMF) without a breach of the dam or its surrounding embankments.

Some background: When Hurricane Agnes struck in 1972, the high-water flows did not destroy the dam itself but eroded the west-side embankment, resulting in enhanced storm wa-

ters flowing downstream from both extensive rainwater and impounded water in the Lake. When the dam complex was restructured after Agnes, the LBWID installed a bascule gate on the top of the dam, which would automatically be lowered during rain events to allow more stormwater to flow through the dam structure. This substantially increased the dam's discharge capacity. However, nothing consequential was required or done to the western earthen embankment, known as the earthen fuse plug. This was restored to its pre-Agnes state, so that future extreme water events would slowly erode it and protect the dam's concrete structure, as it did during Agnes.

In 2021, the Virginia Division of Dam Safety informed the LBWID that the earthen fuse plug was no longer acceptable as a means for avoiding damage to the dam from extreme high-water storm events. Instead, the dam's overflow capacity had to be increased in a different manner to meet a new PMF standard. The new standard is determined through sophisticated hydrologic and hydraulic watershed modeling (H&H modeling). It factors in the Probable Maximum Precipitation (PMP), determined regionally by the federal government. For the Northern Virginia region, the PMP would be a peak rain event from a storm lasting for six hours and generating 25 inches of rain. Since water coming to the dam includes water coming from the 14.5 square-mile upstream watershed area, with higher-than-normal impervious land areas, a PMF event for the dam is approximately 60,000 cubic feet per second (CFS) — more than four times the 14,500 CFS of Agnes. Post-Agnes changes to the dam increased the discharge capacity to 30,000 CFS, which is only half of the new target PMF capacity of 60,000 CFS. Intentional erosion of water through the earthen fuse plug, designed to ameliorate the speed of the downstream flow of stormwater, is no longer permissible.



**2012**—Erosion had taken a toll on the face of the dam. Workmen had to remove loose concrete from the east abutment.

GEORGE MCLENNAN

For the last three years, the LBWID has been dealing with this significant problem efficiently and expeditiously. It is working with contract engineers to develop a plan to meet the 60,000 CFS criteria for dam water discharge without eroding the eastern or western earthen embankments. As of March 2025, a conceptual design plan has been approved, and the consulting engineers are working on design specifications. But the ultimate solution might not be fully in place for several years. The LBWID and its engineers are working closely with the Virginia Division of Dam Safety, which so far is satisfied with the tentative plan. LBWID Trustees are also actively pursuing ways to raise the funds to upgrade the dam to meet current legal requirements.



GEORGE MCLENNAN

**2003**—This is one way to clean up after stormwaters. But things got more mechanized in 2007 and 2011. Every year LBWID staff remove more than 100 tons of trash, tree branches, and the like to keep our Lake beautiful.

## Lake Management

LBWID has been involved almost from its start in protecting the quality of the Lake for swimming, boating and other recreational activities. While our community has little control over development in upstream areas that may impact the quality of the Lake waters, the LBWID continuously encourages — only semi-successfully to date — Lake homeowners to limit use of fertilizers and other pollutants and to avoid discharging all pollutants into sewer drains.

Lakebed dredging is a critical LBWID function to ensure that sediment flowing from upstream areas and Lakeside lots does not silt up the Lake and make it shallower. Prior to 2009, LBWID contracted out its dredging operations, but the contractor

had only large equipment that could not access our narrow, shallow cove areas, so LBWID staff began dredging those areas. In 2002-2003, LBWID designed the Covemaster, its own custom dredging/excavator machine, to access these tight areas.

Finally, in 2009, LBWID brought all dredging operations in-house, using the Covemaster and additional, specialized dredging equipment. It also constructed off-loading facilities at Beaches 3 and 5 for drying and storing dredge spoils before removal to off-site disposal areas.

All dredging operations occur outside the summer swim season. Between March and May, LBWID dredges the Tripps Run side of the Lake, depositing the spoils at the Beach 5 disposal site. Between September and November, it dredges the Holmes Run side, depositing the spoils at the Beach 3 site.

Over the years the LBWID has used a series of disposal sites for the dried spoils. For example, some years ago, our spoils formed part of the base of the Glasgow School ballpark. From 2006 to 2016, a private site near Lorton accepted all the spoils, but since its closure, the LBWID once again uses a series of different disposal sites, selecting those that are most economical for us. Unfortunately, with intense nearby development, the available sites are more distant than the Lorton site, so trucking has become more expensive.

Removing storm debris from the Lake is an important part of LBWID responsibilities for two primary reasons: keeping the Lake safe for healthy swimming and other recreational uses, and preventing storm debris from floating to the dam and potentially damaging dam operations. In 2007, LBWID purchased a specialized debris harvester, a barge-like boat with a large storage area and a conveyor ramp that extends into the water to scoop up waste. LBWID staff annually removes more than 100 tons of organics such as tree branches and trunks; trash such as beer and soda cans, Styrofoam cups, bottles and other fast-food containers; and larger items such as trash cans, patio chairs, clothes, and occasionally dead animals. Long-term residents especially appreciate how much cleaner our Lake has been since LBWID took over.

## Storm Drainage/Erosion Control

In 2020, the LBA and LBWID formed a joint committee to address a variety of erosion problems on LBA common property, especially on Beaches 2 and 4. The most treacherous site was the access road to Beach 2 — a gravel road that often washed out during heavy rains and created a dangerous area for both beachgoers and maintenance and emergency vehicles and personnel.



GEORGE MCLENNAN

**2011—Here's the Trash skimmer at work clearing out one very large double branch that tumbled into the Lake.**

In 2021, LBA and LBWID paved the entire driveway; installed curbing to control stormwater discharge; and armored certain key areas with large stones to disperse the water energy and diminish erosion. Beach 4 also had stormwater runoff problems, so in 2023 LBA and LBWID paved the parking lot area and added stormwater drainage systems. Monitoring continues to identify and control extreme stormwater erosion.

## Tree Removal and Replacement

Luckily for us, Lake Barcroft was situated from the start in a heavily forested area, and even after homes were built, many of those trees remained. However, older trees in this aging forest often fall — from old age, disease or storm damage. Sometimes they fall into the Lake, interfering with the use and maintenance of the Lake and dam. LBWID, with its staff and equipment, is in the best position to handle these fallen trees. In 2019, it adopted a revised tree removal policy. LBWID, at no cost to the homeowner, will remove the portion of their fallen tree extending from the shoreline into the Lake — if this removal takes one hour or less. Otherwise, there will be a reasonable charge. Homeowners remain responsible for removing the downed tree portion on their land.

Since the early 2000s, both LBA and LBWID have been promoting the replacement of fallen, diseased, or older trees to maintain our beloved urban forest by planting new native trees. (Initially the tree replacement program was administered by LBA volunteers; LBWID assumed full responsibility in 2024.) Trees planted under the program help replace the tree canopy, support birds and wildlife, shade homes, capture carbon dioxide, and help retain storm waters — all of which contribute substantially to Lake health.

## Aggressive Lake Plant and Fish Growth

After a 2016 community meeting seeking input from homeowners, the LBWID began to address the increasing growth of two different species of aquatic vegetation in the Lake: spatterdock, a type of water lily; and coontail, a rapidly growing weed-like plant. Both were becoming hazards to navigation and were encroaching on the beaches — in some cases, threatening to create nearly impenetrable mats, which could interfere with boating and swimming. Both plants are native species and provide food and cover to local fish and waterfowl, so LBWID did not plan to eliminate them

altogether, but to control them and stop the ill-effects on water recreation. To control coontail, the LBWID introduced several hundred sterile carp into the Lake, each of which eats up to five pounds of coontail daily. It worked. As to the spatterdock, unfortunately, there is only one effective way to treat this situation — using a federally-approved herbicide, developed for aquatic application. This herbicide is used along the shorelines of Lake common areas that have excess growth, as well as along the shorelines of private properties, but only when requested by the landowners.

The LBWID continues to monitor the rate of plant growth in the Lake.

By 2021, shad fish were reaching overpopulation levels, which could disrupt the ecosystem for other fish. After studying the alternatives, LBWID introduced 1,200 hybrid striped bass, which feed on shad fish. In 2023, another 1,150 were added. Shad fish levels are continuously monitored to see if more hybrid striped bass may be needed.

## 2025 Transfer of Title to the Dam Property to the LBWID

Background: In 1970, Lake homeowners, acting through an organization called BARLAMA, purchased Barcroft Beach, Inc. (BBI), a corporation created by the original developers of the Lake. BBI held title to various common property areas — the Lakebed, beaches, dam, etc. Shortly after the LBWID was created in 1973, BBI granted it the sole right to manage the dam and surrounding property (the LBWID compound), as well as the right to undertake certain management activities on the Lake, Lakebed, and the beaches/common grounds. In 1992, LBA, which had acquired BARLAMA, assumed legal title to all the BBI properties, but management of the dam and the LBWID compound remained unchanged. This ownership situation remained viable so long as LBA, the titleholder, could maintain adequate insurance to cover the dam and the LBWID compound.



GEOERGE MCLENNAN

**2021**—What do you do when coontail plants become a hazard to boaters? Bring in hundreds of sterile carp to eat the coontail. And when shad fish start overpopulating? Bring in the hybrid striped bass, which sometimes have to be restocked.



GEORGE MCLENNAN

**2015**—Trustee Charles de Seve explains LBWID's dredging plans at an annual meeting.

In 2021, however, LBA was told by its insurer that it would no longer cover liabilities related to the dam or its operation. Alternative insurance companies also refused to provide coverage. Other dam owners had the same insurance issues because, as more extreme 21st century weather events occurred, insurance companies became more risk-averse and stopped offering insurance for dam operations.

After an unsuccessful search for new liability insurance, LBA decided to transfer title to the dam and the LBWID compound to the LBWID, which had liability insurance and, as a political subdivision, also had certain protection from liability claims under the doctrine of sovereign immunity. The LBWID already had sole rights and authority over the operation, maintenance and repairs of the dam under the 1973 contract. The LBWID also had the capacity to finance them through

LBWID taxes imposed on Lake homeowners. So, the 2025 title change would have no operational consequences.

After extensive outreach to the community — written and in a series of meetings — the transfer proposal was put to a vote of the LBA members, and it passed overwhelmingly. On February 14, 2025, the LBA formally transferred ownership of the dam and LBWID compound to the LBWID, but with a proviso that ownership would revert to the LBA if the LBWID were dissolved or terminated.

## Conclusion

The LBWID was created to meet a severe community emergency after the Hurricane Agnes storm in 1972. It rebuilt the dam and restored the Lake. And it raised the substantial funds needed to do so because it is a political subdivision with taxing authority and the capacity to issue tax-exempt bonds.

LBWID taxes on our homeowners, collected by Fairfax County, support all the formidable LBWID operations, and LBWID's consequent contributions to our well-being. As we face new, state-required dam improvements, the LBWID remains the critical player in our efforts to ensure the continuation of our Lake community and the safety of our downstream neighbors.

The Lake community in 1972 gave us the gift that keeps on giving — the Lake Barcroft Watershed Improvement District. We should be very grateful.



GEORGE MCLENNAN

**2025**—LBWID Open House: From left, George McLennan, Jerry Mendenhall, Charles De Seve, Davis Grant, Jennifer Grant, Sean Kiser and Tim Cogswell.



**2014**—Newcomer's Barge Parties are always a highlight of the Lake year – and reservations fill up fast.

LARRY GOLFER

## 3. Groups

Central to the joy of living here are the many opportunities for friendship and fun provided by the groups of Lake Barcroft. It's impossible to overstate how vital they are to Lake life. And it's equally impossible to overstate the contributions of these groups to our Lake.

Some were established many years ago. Some are quite new. And some were vibrant for years but have been discontinued. Undoubtedly, by the time this Update is renewed, there will be new groups to respond to new opportunities and needs and some old ones will be gone. We are a community of growth and renewal.

### **The Lake Barcroft Woman's Club (LBWC)**

The LBWC, through its activist members and volunteers, has provided extraordinary contributions to Lake life since its start in 1955.

The Woman's Club supports area charities, provides activities for the Lake community, and builds bonds among the women of Lake Barcroft through a myriad of social opportunities.

The Club raises charitable funds through its annual Lake Barcroft house tour and raffle, organized and supported by Club volunteers. Planning for each year's tour takes months. Finding owners willing to permit public tours of their homes often involves time-consuming requests and conversations. Members sell both tour tickets and raffle tickets in advance. On tour day teams of volunteers meet and greet visitors at each house.

The funds raised through house tours and raffles — in 2024, approximately \$15,000 — go to charities nominated by Club members and selected by a vote of the membership. Over the last 25 years, contributions totaled more than \$275,000.

The Woman's Club has given multiple donations to Culmore Clinic, Justice High School Scholarship Fund, Baileys Crossroads Volunteer Fire Department, Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund, Annandale Christian Community for Action (ACCA), and other organizations that serve our greater community.

The Club also contributes mightily to the joy of living in Lake Barcroft. It annually organizes and manages three beloved Lake traditions — the Halloween Parade, Easter Egg Hunt,

and Fourth of July Parade. Volunteers make these popular events possible, for the young and young-at-heart. In 2024 for example, volunteers filled and hid approximately 3,000 plastic Easter eggs for the Egg Hunt; organized the Hunt by age group; surreptitiously restocked plastic eggs as needed and managed the appearance of a very large Easter Bunny. At least 30 Club members and other volunteers worked through the day from hiding eggs to clean up.

The Woman's Club provides another significant service to the LBA community: a Home Health Aids Closet, through which LBA residents (and their visiting guests) can borrow medical equipment such as crutches, canes, commodes, walkers and shower stools. Woman's Club member Leigh Gonzalez has generously provided the "house" for the closet.

Friendships are created and sustained through many social and educational activities. There are two potluck dinner membership meetings yearly. Additionally, the Club hosts an annual Christmas holiday party, as well as a winter social event for members and their spouses or significant others.

The Club has grown and flourished during the last several years, adding a wide range of member special interest groups — theater adventures, book clubs, craft and floral arrangement designing, eating adventures, and monthly first Friday fun and games, Jeopardy and trivia.



**2004**—Womans Club. Thank the Lake Barcroft Woman's Club for our annual Halloween Parade (cookie table shown above), as well as the Easter Egg Hunt, the July 4 Parade — and all the munchies, music, and good times.



LARRY GOLFER

**2013**—Newcomers' Chili Cook Off. This annual event brings out Lake cooks, who introduce their sometimes eye-watery chili entries to the contest. Here nationally recognized chef and Cookoff Judge Carla Hall names the winners.

## The Lake Barcroft Newcomers Club

The Lake Barcroft Newcomers Club, founded in 1965, serves primarily to introduce new residents to the many joys of living in our community. It also organizes many popular social events open to all interested adult residents, with a special focus on integrating new families into the neighborhood and helping them meet new friends.

Within a month of moving here, each new LBA family receives a welcome note from the Newcomers Club inviting them to contact a Newcomers' volunteer to set up a time for a Welcome Bag delivery. Each bag is delivered in person, to give the family an opportunity to ask questions and get a general idea of the clubs and activities available to them, as well as an overview of the area.

The Welcome Bag itself is insulated and excellent for subsequent beach use. It's imprinted with the Newcomers Club name and a sailboat logo and contains useful information and materials, including welcome letters from the Club and the LBA Manager, directions for accessing LakeLink, the latest LBA Directory, a brochure about the Lake Barcroft Village, a list of other Lake groups and clubs and the latest Parktakes magazine (which covers facilities and programs offered by the Fairfax County Park Department). Newcomers delivered 42 bags in 2023 — the annual record was 53.

The Club also organizes many of the Lake's most popular social activities, including annual Barge Parties, holiday parties, and Chili and Cornbread Cook-offs. It also holds smaller social events, such as a raft-up and swim party, a welcome cruise and barbecue, and a spring lawn party. All these activities are open to both LBA newcomers and old-timers and provide wonderful opportunities for mingling among new and long-term residents.



LARRY GOLFER

**2015**—Music on the Lake. Shown here, from left, are Music on the Lake founder Ayako Doi, cellist Gretchen Gettes, harpist Jacqueline Pollauf and hosts Rebecca Keegan and Jim Jackson.

## Lake Barcroft Rainbow Club

The Lake Barcroft Rainbow Club is a casually organized social group of LGBT+ Lake residents and their friends who gather several times a year for social events: barge parties, house parties, cultural events at local venues, sports activities, restaurant dinners, etc. Typically, a club event attracts 12-40 participants.

The club grew from its informal start in 1999, as the word spread among gay and lesbian Lake residents and others. The club has no dues, bylaws, officers, mission statement or the like, although a coordinator is selected annually.

## Music on the Lake

One of the wonderful additions to Lake life during the last 25 years is the Music on the Lake house concert series. It was started in 2005 by Ayako Doi, and more recently joined by Ken Trotter, as co-director. It has continued largely uninterrupted to the present, with three to five concerts each year during the Lake's off-season, between September and June.

"I get so much joy out of combining my love of good music and beautiful homes," says Ayako, and many neighbors obviously concur. The concerts are usually attended by 35 to 45 neighbors, each of whom currently contributes \$30 to defray expenses and to compensate the musicians. Concerts have been held in many of the lovely Lake homes, graciously made available by the owners as a gift to the community. After the concerts, attendees enjoy receptions with refreshments and friendly conversation with each other and the musicians.

The series primarily features classical music with solo, duo, or trio groups, and occasionally larger ensembles — but tango, jazz, world music and other ethnic ensembles have been featured as well.

Ayako regularly attends Washington area concerts, and when she encounters brilliant musicians, she invites them to perform in the Lake series. She has found that most musicians



LARRY GOLFER

**2019**—Several times a year our talented painters, potters, photographers and more display and sell their work through Lake Barcroft Art League shows. It's a movable artistic feast with venues on each side of the Lake. Here, the Spring Art Show at Dominick Cardella's Home on Waterway.



LARRY GOLFER

**2016**—The Lake Barcroft Village celebrating its 3rd anniversary at Goodwin House/ Baileys Crossroads.

welcome opportunities to perform in a beautiful intimate setting and many want to return. Since the series has become known in area musical circles, musicians often ask to be featured. Those selected are of the highest caliber in their art.

Watch LakeLink, the Newsletter and the Lake Barcroft Facebook Group for notices of upcoming concerts that Ayako and Ken have put together to expand the joy of Lake living.

## **Lake Barcroft Art League**

The Lake Barcroft Art League was founded in 2013 by Jennifer Talati and Louise Zeibell to bring together talented Lake artists and create opportunities for them to showcase their work and engage with fellow art enthusiasts. Membership is open to all Lake artists — new, emerging, or established. The League has more than 20 members including painters, photographers, potters, glass artists, craft, fiber/textile, and jewelry artists. It sponsors several annual events to exhibit member works and to support a community celebration of creativity and local talent — Spring Outdoor Art Exhibit; Fall Art, Music & Food Festival; and Holiday Art Sale. All are designed for visitors to explore and purchase the many items of exquisite artwork created by these gifted artists. Watch for the Newsletter, LakeLink notices and posted signs.

## **The Lake Barcroft Village**

The Lake Barcroft Village (LBV) began serving our community in 2013. It was created by then residents Ann Z. Cook and D'Wayne Gray, as well as other volunteer committee members, after many hours of developmental work.

The LBV is part of a national network of local organizations designed to help aging residents live independently in their homes for as long as possible — or until they choose to leave.

LBV membership is limited to Lake residents and those living in certain contiguous areas and is designed for seniors who from time to time may need assistance and wish to support each other. An active set of volunteers provides services to members, including transportation to and from appointments and events; computer and technical assistance; small home repairs; home safety and accessibility assessments and advice; errands; minor household tasks; weather emergency services; and home security checks. The Village also maintains a preferred provider list for services that are beyond reasonable requests to volunteers.

For many members, the Village's social activities are an important part of their Lake lives. There are frequent coffees, luncheons, happy hours, home visits, etc. The Village also has book clubs, a chess group, and other small group activities.

The Village also encourages LBA initiatives of special importance to seniors, such as the Beach 3 handrail that gives access to people who need help getting in and out of the water.

Wide-ranging Village educational activities are designed to aid the members in many ways, but especially to help ensure home safety and security, vibrant health, financial management, emergency planning, preparation of relevant legal documents, fraud avoidance, etc. Lectures by experts on these and other topics of interest are regularly scheduled and very popular.

Several new Vitality Groups have recently been organized within the Village. These meet once a month on topics rang-



LARRY GOLFER

**2015**—The Village celebrates another anniversary, this time at Clydes. Ron Karpick, then-Village president, welcomes the group.

ing from physical activity and healthy eating to stress management and cognitive vitality, from overall wellness to tech and accessibility. Vitality Groups are included in the Village membership.

As of late 2024, there are 70 Village members — 41 full members who are entitled to receive services; and 29 social members. In addition, there are 47 certified volunteers, generous community members who work to make the Village's objectives possible.

Annual dues for full membership are \$500 for an individual and \$750 for a couple. A social membership is \$150 per person. The Village is a 501(c)(3) organization and is partially supported by tax deductible gifts from Lake Barcroft residents and others.

A Board of Directors is responsible for supervising the Village, but the critical day-to-day activities and management are now in the very capable hands of Cindy Waters, who has been the Executive Director of the Village since 2014.

## **Lake Barcroft Singles Club**

Another recent addition to our Lake social clubs is the LB Singles Group, created in 2022 by Louise Ziebell and Marie-France Smith for single adults in the Lake area. The group of 20-plus members meets regularly for social occasions either in members' homes or on outings including to wineries, concerts, and theater events.

## **Lake Barcroft Boat Sharing Program**

The member-initiated Lake Barcroft Boat Sharing Program began in 2022 through the work of the late John Shapard to enable Lake residents and their guests to enjoy boating on the Lake without having to invest in buying boats of their own and adding to the over-crowded boat racks on the Lake beaches.

The Sharing Program provides its members access to a fleet of shared boats (28 as of 2024), stored at Beaches 2, 3, and 4. The fleet includes canoes, paddleboards, and kayaks.

The Program encourages its members to follow responsible boating practices to minimize adverse impact on the Lake's ecosystem.

Any Lake Barcroft resident can become a member of the Program by paying annual dues (in 2024, \$35 per household) and agreeing to the terms of the membership agreement, including requirements for caring for the fleet and ensuring that the boats are locked when not in use. Members are free to use any available Program boat during normal daylight hours. As of 2024, the Program had 91 households as members.



LARRY GOLFER

**2019**—Lake Barcroft band French Coast Cafe entertains neighbors at a house concert at the Golfer/Bausell home on Jay Miller Drive with (from left) Larry Golfer on bass, Carole Bausell on vocals, and Duane Siler on guitar, with David Savage on cornet.

## SEED

We live in a community of doers — a dynamic combination of folks who see a need for action and who organize to improve and expand the quality of our shared environment. A great example is our newest specialty Lake group, SEED (Service, Education, Ecology, Discovery), founded in 2024 by Anne Brosnan, Joanne Wagner, Mike Gates, and other residents working to improve the health and beauty of the Lake Barcroft environment.

For more on SEED, go to Chapter 5.

## Discontinued Clubs/Concerts

**Barcrofters**, a local social club, was founded in the early 1980's by Carolyn Jones and continued in operation until 2024. The club was designed for women interested in developing and nurturing friendships and making new friends. From October through May, the club hosted monthly brunches, luncheons, or afternoon teas. During the summer, it hosted an annual barge party.

Participants paid only small attendance fees, because Barcrofters' volunteers provided most of the hosting, cooking, set up and clean up.

Roxanna Douglas was the guiding spirit for most years since 2000, and the women of Lake Barcroft are in her debt for the many fun-filled Barcrofters' events.

**Rusticway Music Concerts.** We were fortunate to have the Rusticway Music Concerts which enhanced our community from 2004 through 2016. Up to 60 friends and neighbors met on three Sunday afternoons a year at the home of Marion Baker and Kristin Gilbert to attend a wide variety of concerts.

The concerts were open to all Lake residents for a donation of \$15 per concert. The funds were used to pay the performing musicians, with any year-end balance donated to the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund for Justice HS students.

Each concert lasted an hour or two and concluded with opportunities to meet the musicians. Often, Suzanne and Michael Niebling would provide wonderful treats and wine for the concert-attendees.

Most, but not all, concerts were classical and featured gifted local professional musicians, many of whom went on to musical careers beyond the Washington D.C. area. At least one concert a year featured "emerging young artists." All performers would be introduced by Baker and Gilbert, both of whom are professional musicians well-known to the Washington DC music community.

**Opera at the Lake.** At least once a year from 2010 to 2015, Anne and Will O'Neil arranged for Riverbend Opera Company to offer full-scale operas at their Lakeview home for 35-40 Lake guests. In addition to these opera offerings, the O'Neils sponsored other musical events for the benefit of the community.

**Bluegrass House Concerts.** From June 2003 to May 2012, Regina and Jim Derzon sponsored 50 Bluegrass Concerts at their home on Grass Hill Terrace. Outstanding local and national bluegrass musicians showed up, and their house was always packed. Before the final concert, Regina wrote: "Since our first concert on June 13, 2003, we've invited over 75 musicians and 4,000 guests into our home to support DC area bluegrass. We've met a ton of folks, eaten terrific potluck dishes, enjoyed wonderful music together, and have gotten to know the musicians up close and personal. In addition, we've hosted 10 music workshops and several fundraisers for the DC Bluegrass Union (where I serve as a board member)." Regina and Jim moved to Maryland in September 2012.

# 4. Lakewide Events

There are many reasons so many of us love living at Lake Barcroft —in addition to the special joys of swimming, boating, and just hanging out in the water and at the beaches. And one of the big reasons is meeting and playing with our neighbors.

Lake living has offered many very special popular opportunities for fun with other Lake residents throughout the last 25 years — and earlier. All are the result of hours of volunteer initiative and labor that deserve our gratitude.

Here is a chronological list of the current yearly events open to all Lake residents, many of which started well before 2000:

- Annual Meeting (LBA) February
- Easter Egg Hunt (LB Woman's Club) Spring
- Beach Clean-Up Day (LBA) Spring
- Sand Day (LBA) Spring
- Spring Outdoor Art Exhibit (LB Art League)
- July Fourth Parade (LB Woman's Club) Summer
- Fourth of July Fireworks (LBA) Summer
- Ice Cream Social (LBA) Summer
- National Night Out (LBA) Summer
- Movies at the Beach (LBA) Summer
- Labor Day Games (LBA) Summer
- Lake Fest Celebration (LBA) Fall
- Boat Auction (LBA) Fall
- Civic Affairs Meeting (LBA) Fall
- Halloween Parade (LB Woman's Club) Fall
- Holiday Art Exhibit (LB Art League) Winter

And there's more. In addition to events listed here, there are dozens of ad hoc activities to watch for including the Turkey Trot at Thanksgiving, beach gatherings, holiday singing, car shows, haunted houses, and many others to brighten our schedules. Several Lake sections also sponsor potluck happy hours, barbecues, block parties, holiday parties, etc. for folks in the immediate neighborhood.

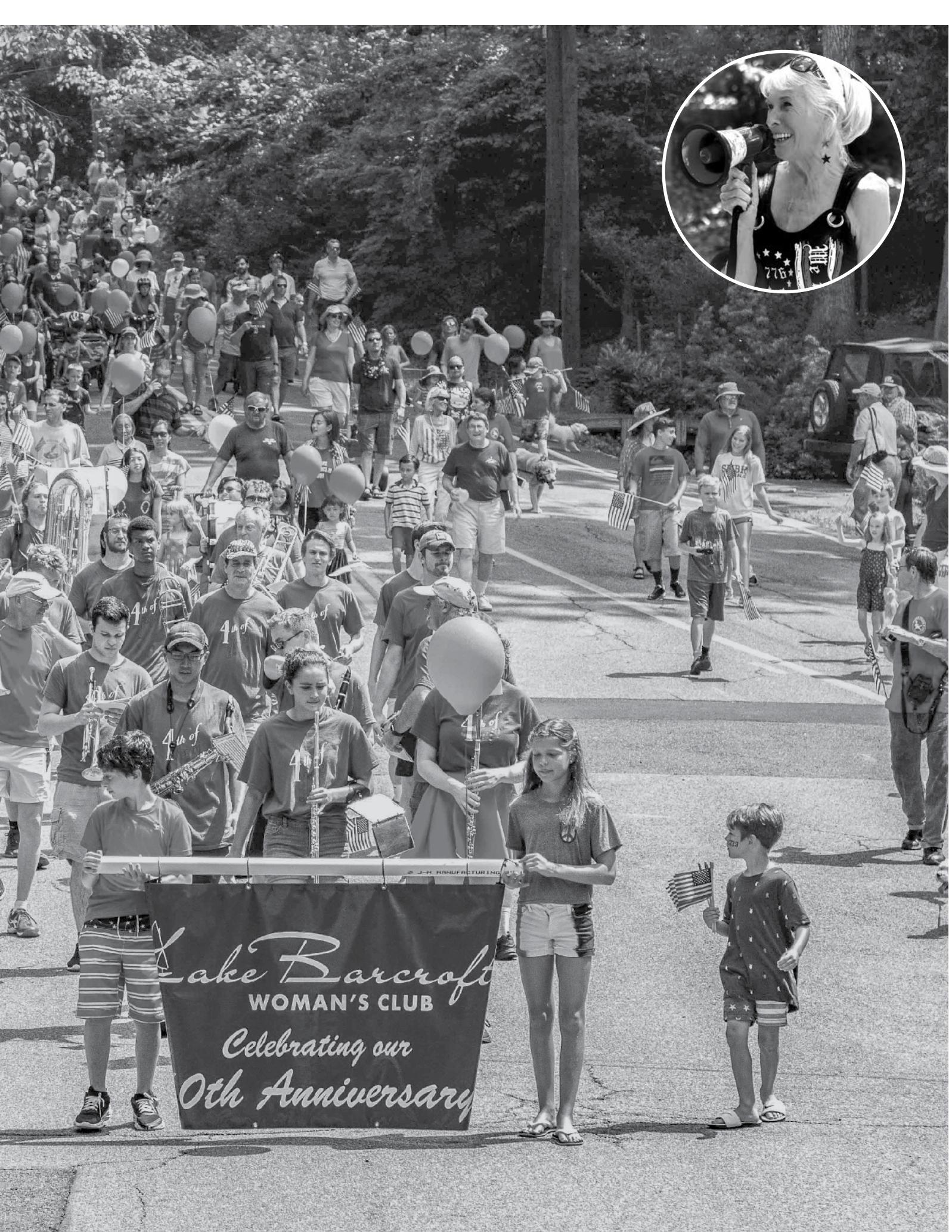
To a large degree, it is by attending these events that lifetime friendships are formed, neighbors introduced, volunteers sought and honored, and fun and games enjoyed.

Watch for announcements on LakeLink, the LBA website, Lake Barcroft Newsletter and signs posted around the Lake. Plan to attend — better yet, volunteer to help.

**2018**—The July 4 Parade kicks off. Jeannie Meyer (insert) of the Lake Barcroft Woman's Club has organized this parade since 1973. She also ran the Easter Egg Hunt for more than 20 years (until 2022), and the Halloween Parade, which she started in the 1980s and still manages.

LARRY GOLFER





J-H MANUFACTURING CO.  
Lake Barcroft  
WOMAN'S CLUB  
Celebrating our  
50th Anniversary

# 5. A Boom in Environmental Action

The last 25 years have seen a significant focus on the environment of our community. For example, we have an award-winning tree replacement program open to all residents. Regular Newsletter articles focus residents' attention on environmental challenges and often provide useful gardening advice. Community-wide programs and celebrations shine a spotlight on the Lake environment, and activities to curtail the geese population remain strong. We discourage the removal of healthy trees, and volunteers regularly work on restoring and maintaining LBA common grounds. The LBWID aggressively clears floating debris and storm flotsam from the Lake. We also share our community with a wide variety of birds, aquatic life, and mammals, enhancing our quality of life.

## Eras That Blossomed with Ecological Activity

Just as two rivers may merge at a junction to become one larger and more powerful river, the confluence of leaders and volunteers in our community over the past 25 years has resulted in periods of extraordinary activity and productivity in preserving and enhancing the Lake environment.

### The Betsy & Kevin Era 2001 – 2017

With strong educational and professional backgrounds in biology and ecology, Betsy Washington and husband Kevin Howe provided exemplary environmental leadership on the

Board and in the community. They also wrote many educational articles for the Newsletter, organized native plant activities, and hosted numerous Earth Day extravaganzas. They were highly instrumental in helping to preserve the Lake's ecosystem and advance innovative programs.

### Post-Pandemic Environmental Renaissance 2023 – 2025

With the Covid pandemic behind us, we are witnessing an environmental renaissance in Lake Barcroft. Environmental Quality Chair Carole Bausell, equipped with a background of volunteer leadership, experience in conservation, and incredible partners in LBA Maintenance and Improvements



**2025**—Today's SEED developed out of the 2023 Environmental Quality Committee. SEED members remove invasive plants, add native plants, sponsor bird walks, winter sowing, and more.

Chair Reid Voss and LBWID Executive Director Davis Grant, quickly assembled a top-notch group of advisors to form the Environmental Quality Committee (EQC). Some EQC members began meeting informally over coffee to discuss environmental matters. These conversations eventually sparked a grassroots environmental movement. A new club called SEED — Service, Education, Ecology, Discovery — was born!

## Model Programs

### The Tree Replacement Program

Have you noticed that when you drive into Lake Barcroft on a hot summer day, the air feels cooler? That's thanks to our urban forest. The Lake and our large, mature trees are the most valuable assets of this community. Not only do the trees provide shade, they also play a vital role in the health of the soil and the water quality of the Lake. Research in plant ecology shows that the extensive surface root systems of mature trees hold soil particles in place and absorb runoff. Our trees have helped maintain the character of our community for the past 75 years; with responsible planning, they will continue to do so for future generations.

In 2009, a team of residents developed a strategy to preserve our urban forest. They recognized that most of the trees were around the same age, some approaching the end of their life expectancy. They also noted that lawns, fertilizer, and development were negatively impacting tree health and preventing new saplings from establishing. Dying trees needed to be replaced both on common grounds and private property.

Betsy Washington and Board member George McLennan combined scientific rigor with political savvy to create the Lake Barcroft Tree Replacement Program. Betsy outlined the program's scientific merits, while George secured co-sponsorships from both the LBWID and the LBA, essentially ensuring its success. Under the program, Lake homeowners could apply for a free tree from a list of available trees procured from a wholesaler. Trees were ordered, delivered and planted under the watchful eye of Elaine Lindstrom. On average about 25 trees were planted each year.

In 2010, the Lake Barcroft Tree Replacement Program won the Fairfax County Friends of Trees Award. Betsy Washington also received an award in the individual category for her outstanding contributions.

In 2024, the LBWID took over the Tree Replacement Program.



TOM DONLAN

**2004—Holly Hazard on the helm with daughter Cricket and Dakota, the original Geese Peace Dog, ready to worry some geese.**

We received a \$4,000 grant from the Virginia Department of Forestry's Trees for Clean Water Program, and trees were planted at Beaches 2, 3, 4, and 5.

### GeesePeace: Innovation at the Lake

For the first 40 years of our community life, an increasing population of Canada geese returned to nest along the Lake each year. While charming to watch, their droppings fouled large swaths of the beaches and Lakefront properties, polluted the water and presented health risks to humans. In 1991, the community began tracking down geese nests and addling the eggs — coating them with corn oil within 14 days of hatching.

This dramatically reduced gosling births, but large numbers of geese still frequented the Lake to the dismay of its residents. In 1998, some members of the community — at their wits' end with the foul state of affairs at the beaches — even considered a controversial goose roundup and slaughter program. This divided neighbors and prompted Lake residents Holly Hazard and David Feld to develop a humane solution. They called their program "GeesePeace."

Geese eggs are still addled. But now volunteers travel around the Lake by boat from early May to mid-June with a dog, typically a border collie, specially trained to bark and harass the geese to encourage them to fly away before they molt. (Once molting happens, the geese cannot fly and are essentially trapped.) The geese view the patrolling dog as a predator and tend to leave.

Before the dog patrol program, the LBA used a commercial service to move the geese off the Lake. But in 1999, the LBA decided to invest in the program, purchasing a border collie

and a jon boat. The program has continued over the years with various dogs, their volunteer hosts, and volunteer boat drivers. And because the geese now “understand” the program, volunteers only need to go out a few times a season to remind them to move off the Lake before they molt. There is one caveat: Residents must not feed the geese, a practice that also happens to be harmful to the geese themselves.

In 2010, LBA presented its Exceptional Service Award to Holly Hazard in recognition of her years of work with GeesePeace.

### **SEED: The Movement, The Club**

The LBA Environmental Quality Committee supports activities that raise awareness about environmental issues affecting the community and the Lake. This group was instrumental in planning activities, writing articles for the Newsletter, and decision-making. Over time, a core group of committed Environmental Quality members began meeting informally and involving other like-minded neighbors.

SEED is now a neighborhood club that works for an ecologically sound and sustainable habitat for pollinating insects and other wildlife for the benefit and enjoyment of the Lake Barcroft community. SEED activities include invasive plant removal, gardening with natives, bird walks, winter sowing and more.

## **Native Gardening**

### **The Demonstration Garden at Beach 5.**

During her service as LBA Environmental Chair, Betsy Washington led the installation of a native plant demonstration garden at Beach 5. She invited residents to help maintain it by planting native plants, removing weeds, and creating signage. Resident Kay Cooper remembers those days well: “Betsy was the tip of the spear for creating Weed Warriors,” as the group became known. “She taught us how to identify and safely remove invasive plants and organized the first weed pulls. She also invited residents to donate trees and plants for the garden; our LB yoga class donated a bench. There were demonstrations at Earth Day events about how to plant trees—native of course.” Other native garden projects followed at Beach 3 and the Woman’s Club Community Garden.

In February 2010, Betsy compiled a Lake Barcroft Plant List, which she posted on the Lake Barcroft website. Featuring more than 120 species of popular native plants, growing tips, ratings for wildlife values, and photos, it remains an invaluable resource.

In 2023, Mike Gates, an entomologist and avid gardener, took on the yeoman’s task of refurbishing Betsy’s Demonstration Garden after Betsy’s departure in 2017. He designed the new garden, planted it, created colorful labels featuring QR codes, and engaged community volunteers to help restore this community treasure. Phase I of the new Demonstration Garden is now complete. Visitors can learn about plants they might like to add to their own gardens.

### **Pollinator Pathway**

After clearing invasives and thick brush along Rauth Lane, the southern approach to the Woman’s Club Garden off Lakeview Drive, Anne Brosnan, Joanne Wagner, and others planted a significant number of native plants and labeled them with QR codes. The lane is now affectionately known as Pollinator Pathway.

### **The Native Plant Gardens at Beach 1**

The open grassy area at Beach 1 features not one but two native plant pollinator gardens. The first was installed by Michael Simonson as his Eagle Scout project in 2022. Well after its completion, neighbor Rick Clayton took maintenance of the garden under his wing, and then, feeling inspired, planted a second native garden. Between the two gardens, the butterflies apparently are having a field day.

### **The Median Project**

Maintaining the grassy medians in a neighborhood can be a labor-intensive and expensive enterprise. Fertilizers or weed killers sprayed on medians can flow into the Lake. In the worst case, median areas can erode, bringing debris flowing into the Lake. In 2023 and 2024, Environmental Quality volunteers planted a series of median test plots to look for ways to improve median design, installation and maintenance.



LARRY GOLFER

**2023—Weed pull at the Woman’s Club Garden.**



LARRY GOLFER

**2023**—Pollinator Pathway on the Lakeview Drive side of the Community Garden offers quick lessons on pollinator friendly plants.

■ **Aqua Terrace Entrance.** Melanie Brookes-Weiss applied her extensive expertise in native plants and her sense of design to the traffic island at the entrance to the neighborhood at Aqua Terrace. It now showcases beautiful native plants and is easier for the grounds crew to maintain.

■ **Lakeview Drive Median.** High school student Brooke Ehmann-Jones implemented an extraordinary proposal for planting a native plant garden in the median on Lakeview Drive to promote native plant biodiversity and prevent erosion of the slope. She created a plant list of 10 species that would work best in the plot's conditions, choosing deer resistant and erosion preventative species. The plot now serves as a viable alternative to grass in the median.

■ **Lakeview Drive Traffic Island.** Rick Clayton installed another median test plot at a small traffic island on Lakeview Drive. The result: an attractive, pollinator-friendly display of plants that needs no mowing.

The hope is that more test plots will join these over the coming years.

## Invasive Species on Land and Lake

A constant theme over the past 25 years has been removing highly aggressive invasive vines, groundcovers, shrubs and trees. Invasive plants reduce the amount of light, nutrients, and water available to native plants and can alter the soil chemistry and erosion patterns.

A visit to Swift Island in 2005 revealed a number of troublesome invasive trees such as Tree of Heaven and mimosa, which continue to overwhelm the island to this day. A visit to the Woman's Club Garden revealed porcelain-berry vine, English ivy, and Japanese honeysuckle — all incredibly destructive.

But damage from invasive plants was not limited to the LBA's common grounds and gardens. In the waters of the Lake, danger lurks as well. On July 13, 2016, LBWID and LBA held a Community Meeting to tell residents about two invasive aquatic plants that threatened our Lake — spatterdock (*nuphar luteum*) and coontail (*ceratophyllum demersum*) — and to discuss how these two should be managed. In the end, spatterdock was treated with an aquatic grade herbicide, and coontail was treated by stocking the Lake with sterile grass carp.

In 2023, warning bells sounded once again about the intrusion of the invasive two-horned trapa, (also known as water chestnut) into the Potomac watershed. Typically, infested waterways suffer from degraded water quality and detrimental impacts to surrounding habitats. As of late 2021, two-horned trapa had been found in more than 70 locations in Northern Virginia (although not at our Lake). The Environmental Quality Committee invited experts from the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District to Lake Fest in 2023 and again in 2024 to teach Lake Barcroft residents how to identify and report these invasive plants.

Early in her term on the Board, Carole Bausell met with Dominion Power to discuss Dominion's routine use of herbicides on their rights-of-way throughout the neighborhood. She was able to forge an agreement with Dominion through which neighbors could opt out of this program. Dominion also agreed to stop spraying herbicide on Lake Barcroft common property. Former Virginia House Delegate and Lake resident Kaye Kory was extremely helpful with this initiative.



2016



2025

To celebrate Arbor Day, Dylan Deardorff and Will Edmonson donated 100 Autumn Blaze red maple saplings to our community. Sixty were handed out to neighbors. LBA planted the rest in the Lake's common areas. Here are original 2016 saplings along Lakeview Drive and how they look in 2025.

## The Magic of Swift Island

Swift Island and its trees figure prominently in the presence of great blue herons and other wondrous birds at our Lake. For years, the herons have raised their young in nests high up in the pine trees. The island's habitat is rarely disturbed by humans, and that contributes greatly to the ongoing presence of these birds and other wildlife. But Swift Island has long been host to invasive vines, plants, and ground covers that literally threaten the life of its trees. However, hope is in the air. The Lake Barcroft Woman's Club has decided to champion the trees of Swift Island.

With the help of Club donations, LBA is supporting activities to save Swift Island's trees from the invasive plants, which if left undisturbed would surely kill them. In the past couple of years, contractors have worked on Swift Island to eradicate vines and Tree of Heaven.

## Earth Day Blends Environmental Education and Celebration

For the past 25 years, our community has continued to be passionate about preserving our cherished Lake environment. Since the early days of the LBA Newsletter, articles and photographs tell a story of unwavering commitment to sustainability with gatherings highlighting topics such as tree care,

eco-friendly lawn equipment, and even the safe disposal of hazardous waste. Nothing better exemplifies this commitment than the community's Earth Day celebration.

The first Lake Barcroft Earth Day celebration on record occurred in 1997, led by George Waters. It was a vibrant affair with vendors selling native plants, LBWID staff displaying Lake critters, and a Native American guest performing an awe-inspiring dance in traditional garb to the recorded sounds of Native-American music.

In the 2004 and 2005 Earth Days, Kevin Howe with LBWID assistance, hosted Tree Planting Workshops on planting techniques that make a significant difference in the long-term health and survival of each tree. Native plant seedlings were distributed to residents. Beach 3 became a green haven with new trees and shrubs.

In the 2006 Earth Day celebration, 500 native plants were given away. And large native trees were planted to beautify the area.

By 2010, Earth Day had been transformed into a grand celebration, blending environmental learning, live music, and food at Beach 5. Highlights from that year included Lake tours, garden tours, GeesePeace information, master gardener advice and a scavenger hunt. Every year Earth Day got bigger. Eventually there were live owls, falcons and other hawks, plant

sales, and a photo show. There was a fishpond, native plants workshop, a kids' art workshop, a LBWID storm-runoff display, and an Earth Day raffle. In 2018, Christina Anderson took the reins for Earth Day and continued the tradition for the next two years with great success.

Then sadly, everything came to a halt when the Covid pandemic cancelled the 2020 Lake Barcroft Earth Day.

## Lake Fest Emerges from the Ashes

The passing of the pandemic in 2023 saw the birth of a new August community event called Lake Fest just prior to the start of school. Lake Fest featured knowledgeable neighbors sharing their experiences. There were stations on our birds, bugs, how to grow a vegetable garden, hands-on outdoor painting, and how to keep bees. Attendees received passports to guide them through Lake Fest stations. Adults as well as children got into the competitive spirit of having their passports checked off at every station. Bluegrass music by resident Randy Barrett's band, a barbecue from Justice Crew, and a raffle for one of Nolan Stokes' highly valued birdhouses completed the evening.



2024—Winter weed pull at Beach 5 garden.

## Youthful Contributions

The LBA has sponsored numerous Eagle Scout projects over the years that greatly benefitted our environment. In 2022, Michael Simonson's project introduced the first native plant pollinator garden at Beach 1. Thanks to Sam Casolini's project in 2024, the turtles in our Lake now have basking platforms. And hats off to Connor Friedman, whose 2025 project entailed revamping our scenic walking trail next to Beach 3. This project will save 27 trees by building protective beaver cages and removing invasive vines.

To all the individuals, families, and groups who have contributed over the years, and to those who will continue this legacy for future generations, we residents of the Lake thank you. Your hard work and passion ensure that Lake Barcroft remains a sanctuary for humans and wildlife alike and a place of natural beauty for us all to cherish.

Carole Bausell — with help from Larry Golfer — substantially wrote this section; we are very grateful.



TOM DONLAN

Our healthy Lake is a magic place for catching large-mouth bass, hybrid striped bass, crappie, bluegill, carp—in all 36 species of fish.

WILDLIFE GUIDE

## Healthy Lake Critters, Healthy Lake

By Kevin Hardy

Being an open water lifeguard at Lake Barcroft comes with many rewards, one of which is the unique opportunity to observe firsthand the behavior of the diverse wildlife inhabiting the Lake and its shoreline. Lifeguards spend hours each summer day watching the water at the Lake's five beaches. While our primary focus is ensuring the safety of human swimmers, part of that responsibility involves understanding the Lake's ecosystem and the creatures that live in and around it.

Many of these organisms serve as key indicators of the Lake's overall health. While I may not have formal training in wildlife biology, my childhood explorations of the Lake and my years as a lifeguard have given me valuable insight into the critters that call Lake Barcroft home. I offer the following short wildlife articles based on my experiences.

### **Bio-Indicators of Lake Barcroft's Ecosystem: A Balanced Freshwater Ecology**

Lake Barcroft's freshwater ecology is teeming with bio-indicator species — both flora and fauna — that play a crucial role in reflecting the health of the ecosystem. These organisms are sensitive to changes in water quality, pollution, and environmental conditions, making their presence and populations key indicators of the Lake's overall balance. Although lifeguards don't have a primary responsibility of monitoring water quality, they, alongside LBWID staff, fishermen, and observant residents, report any noticeable changes in the environment that may prompt scientific testing. Monitoring these bio-indicators is central to the LBA's water quality policy.

Aquatic flora such as water lilies, algae, and aquatic grasses (like coontail and American elodea) are essential for maintaining water quality. They filter pollutants, support biodiversity, and provide shelter and food for various animals. Spadefoot dock, locally known as “lily pads,” enhances water oxygenation and offers shelter for aquatic species. While green algae can be beneficial, promoting the health of fish and invertebrates, excessive blooms — often caused by nutrient runoff — can reduce water clarity and deplete oxygen, negatively impacting other aquatic life. Brown algae, though generally less harmful, can contribute to water discoloration, affecting aesthetics and recreational activities. Filamentous algae, which grows on structures like docks and buoys, provides a habitat for small fish and invertebrates, though it, too, can cause issues when overgrown.

Water clarity and turbidity are also critical indicators of the Lake’s health, influencing light penetration and plant growth, which in turn impact the fish, turtles, and other aquatic life. Lifeguards monitor these factors daily in the summer months using a Secchi disk. While water clarity in the Lake has been generally good for an urban watershed, the average 3.5-foot visibility and silty bottom have limited the growth of diverse aquatic grasses, which are crucial for fish habitat. Fishermen often point out the lack of these natural shelters, although swimmers and boaters appreciate the minimal obstructions.

Invertebrates such as dragonflies, water striders, worms, mollusks, bryozoans, crayfish, and even the once-present freshwater jellyfish serve as critical bio-indicators of water health. Throughout the Lake’s history, the abundance of these organisms has naturally fluctuated. Currently, there are strong populations of water striders, mollusks, worms, and bryozoans, while slight declines in dragonflies and crayfish have been observed. Freshwater jellyfish, once part of the ecosystem, haven’t been seen in over a decade. While the absence of a single species isn’t always a sign of environmental decline, a significant drop in all in-

vertebrates can indicate serious ecosystem imbalance. These organisms play vital roles in nutrient cycling, water filtration, and food supply for larger species, making them essential for maintaining the Lake’s health.

Fish species, such as shad, shiners, and chub, are among the most sensitive bio-indicators in Lake Barcroft. These fish are highly reactive to changes in oxygen levels and pollution, often being the first to show signs of stress when water quality declines or temperatures rise excessively. Their presence — or absence — provides valuable insights into the health of the aquatic ecosystem.

Reptiles and amphibians, including frogs, salamanders, and turtles, are also key indicators of water quality and habitat stability, as they depend on clean, well-oxygenated environments. Species like the American bullfrog and salamanders, such as the spotted salamander, mud salamander, and red-spotted newt, are particularly sensitive to pollutants and habitat disruption. Their continued presence in and around the Lake suggests a healthy ecosystem. Turtles, including the river cooter, red-eared slider, and common snapping turtle serve as both predators and prey within the food web, further highlighting the balance within the Lake’s ecosystem.

The diversity of bird species around Lake Barcroft also offers insights into ecosystem health. Aquatic birds such as cormorants, herons (including great



2004—Beaver lodge.

TOM DONLAN

blue heron, black-crowned night heron, and little green heron), ducks, geese, and kingfishers, as well as top predator birds like eagles, ospreys, and hawks, rely on a robust fish population and healthy water quality. Ducks, like mallards and wood ducks, along with Canada geese, feed on aquatic plants, grasses, and small invertebrates. The abundance of these birds reflects the balanced food web that supports them.

Aquatic mammals, like beavers and muskrats, demonstrate the full diversity of the Lake's ecosystem. In a suburban environment like Lake Barcroft, the waters of the Lake and the trees that surround it, attract these rodents. The fact the Lake can support these unique creatures offers insight to the biodiversity of the ecosystem. While beavers can be considered a nuisance by some residents due to their tree-cutting habits, they have acclimated well to the suburban landscape surrounding the Lake, contributing to habitat creation for other species.

Muskrats are frequently seen feeding on aquatic vegetation, clams, and snails in the Lake. These small, semi-aquatic mammals play a role in the Lake's food web, helping to regulate populations of certain invertebrates and mollusks. Their presence, alongside that of beavers, reflects the adaptability of wildlife within the suburban environment of Lake Barcroft, showcasing how mammals can coexist within human-altered landscapes while maintaining important ecological functions.

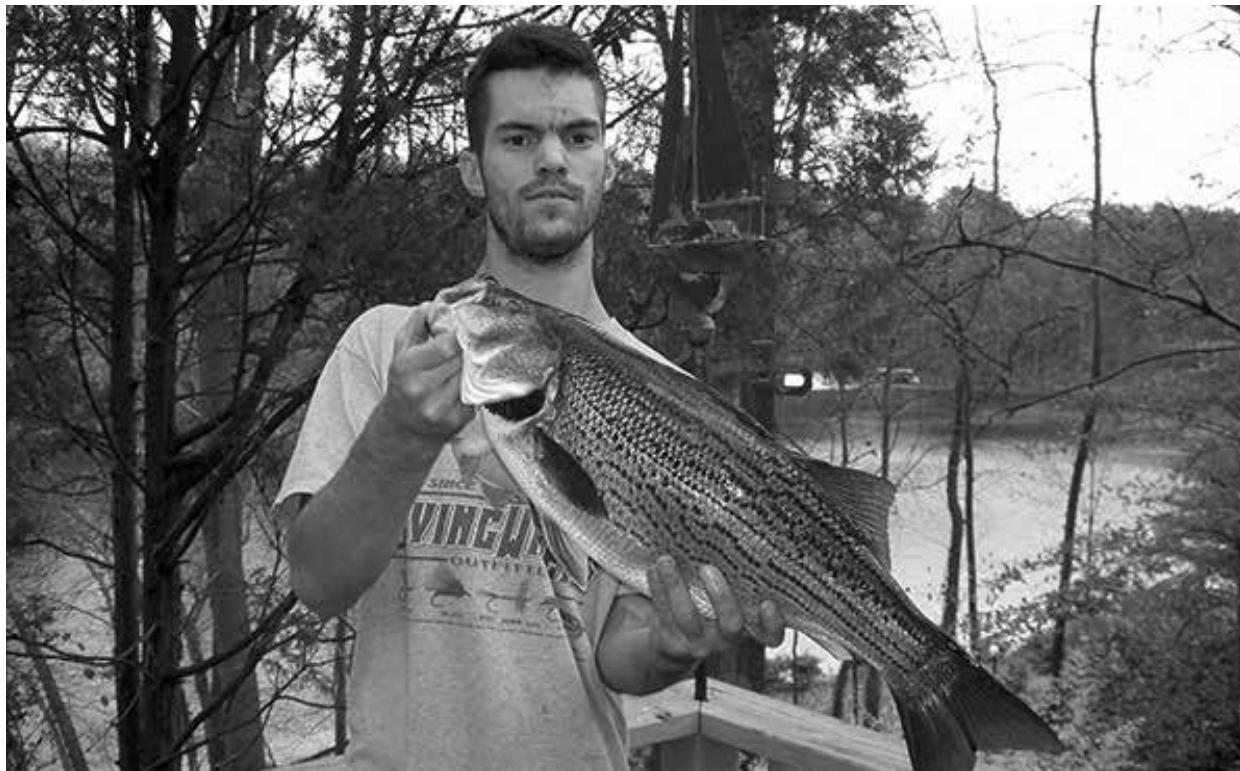
A unique and unexpected visitor to Lake Barcroft in the early 2000s was the North American river otter, a species not native to the Lake. Otters typically avoid areas with high human activity, live at low population densities, and in some parts of the United States, have yet to recover from historic population declines. As a result, interactions with humans are rare. Given the urban and suburban environment of Northern Virginia, lifeguards were surprised to spot a pair of these playful mammals living in the Lake. Their presence was a remarkable sign of a healthy and sustainable ecosystem.

Unfortunately, the otters' stay was short-lived. One was tragically found dead by a fisherman in a cove near Crosswoods Circle, and the other was never seen again. Before disappearing, the remaining otter was mistaken for a swimmer in distress by two boaters, prompting a two-day emergency search for a missing person. It was only after police forensics examined a floating object (a foam swim noodle) left behind that they determined it had been clawed by the otter, likely one of the animal's playthings. Despite their brief appearance, the otters left a lasting impression on the residents lucky enough to observe them, highlighting the Lake's ability to support a wide variety of wildlife.

Together, these bio-indicator species — ranging from plants to fish, invertebrates to birds — offer valuable insights into the overall health of Lake Barcroft. The Lake's rich biodiversity indicates a balanced freshwater ecosystem capable of supporting a wide range of life. Monitoring and protecting these species is vital to preserving the delicate balance of the Lake's environment and ensuring its future health.

## **The Diverse and Thriving Fishery of Lake Barcroft**

Lake Barcroft is home to a diverse and healthy fishery, with at least 36 species of fish identified by LBWID staff in the Lake and its tributaries. Among the most commonly targeted by anglers are large-mouth bass, hybrid striped bass, crappie, sunfish/bluegill, channel catfish, and bullhead catfish. Other species, such as perch and common carp, are present in minimal to moderate numbers. In recent years, area fishermen have also reported sightings of the invasive northern snakehead, a notable game fish that some ecologists fear may threaten the balance of native species. However, there has been no significant evidence of this occurring in Lake Barcroft, with snakehead reports remaining low compared to more common species like bass, crappie, and catfish.



**2004**—Does the Lake have larger fish? Ask Tim Hardy who caught this wiper – a hybrid of a pure striped bass and a white bass.

Fishing from a small, stable boat offers the best chance for success, though docks and banks on common properties also provide good fishing opportunities. A community initiative started by Mike Korin, Jr., resulted in the installation of five artificial fish structures in 15 feet of water near the Beach 4 dock. These structures help provide fish with much-needed cover, as Lake Barcroft has limited natural aquatic vegetation and few downed trees. For largemouth bass, which is the most prized catch in the Lake, fishing near these structures or at bottom transitions can yield success, particularly with a Texas-rigged worm or mid-depth crank-bait like a classic Bomber A minnow.

Shad, shiners, and chub are particularly important species in Lake Barcroft because they serve as bio-indicators of water quality. These fish are sensitive to changes in oxygen levels and pollution, and they are often the first to die off when the water becomes excessively warm. Monitoring the health of these species can provide early warning signs of environmental stress in the Lake's ecosystem, helping to ensure that water quality

remains high for both wildlife and recreation.

Fishing in Lake Barcroft is a rewarding experience, and while live bait is allowed, it must come from within the Lake to prevent the introduction of invasive species. The Lake remains a low-pressure fishery, making it a great place for both experienced anglers and those new to the sport. Most residents practice catch-and-release, but limited take is permitted, with restrictions on Largemouth Bass (only two per day over 12 inches).

## **The Hidden Role of Mollusks in Lake Barcroft's Ecosystem**

Our youth often enjoy searching for mollusks — snails and “clams” — on the Lakebottom. These mollusks are crucial bio-indicator species, meaning their presence signifies that the Lake is free of heavy pollutants and has a balanced ecology. As filter feeders, they help keep the Lake clean by consuming microorganisms and aquatic plant material while also playing a key role in assessing the Lake's water quality.

Lake Barcroft is home to several species of freshwater mollusks. The most commonly found snails include the non-native Japanese mystery snail and the native banded mystery snail. These snails, along with freshwater mussels like the eastern pond mussel and eastern elliptio, are important filter feeders. They clean the Lake by filtering particulates and pollutants, indicating a healthy aquatic environment. The presence of large, healthy populations of these mollusks suggests that Lake Barcroft enjoys relatively good water quality, especially since many freshwater mussels are endangered across the U.S.

Mollusks also have fascinating life cycles. For example, they rely on host species, such as fish, to carry their parasitic larvae until they are mature. These mollusks live long lives, sometimes up to 60-100 years, and their longevity further highlights the stability of the Lake's environment. However, despite being edible, it is not advisable to eat these mollusks due to their role as filter feeders in an urban watershed, which means they could contain pollutants.

Next time you encounter a mollusk in Lake Barcroft, take a moment to appreciate its role as a natural water filter and bio-indicator, helping to maintain the health of the Lake's ecosystem. Their presence is a sign of good water quality and ecological balance.

## **Crayfish: Indicators of Lake Barcroft's Water Quality**

Crayfish are freshwater crustaceans commonly found in lakes, streams, and ponds. These small, lobster-like creatures are an essential part of the aquatic ecosystem, contributing to the food web by feeding on decaying plant matter, small fish, and invertebrates, while also serving as prey for fish, birds, and mammals. Their presence in the streams leading into Lake Barcroft and in the extreme shallows of the beaches give a positive indication that the Lake's overall water quality of Lake Barcroft is good. When crayfish are present in healthy numbers, it's generally a good sign that

the water quality is high, and the ecosystem is functioning well. Conversely, a decline in crayfish can suggest that there are environmental issues that need to be addressed. Lifeguards are trained to take notice of these unique freshwater creatures and report changes.

Crayfish can often be spotted near the water's edge, particularly in shallow areas with rocky or vegetative cover. Observers can look for small mounds of mud or sand, which are sometimes created by crayfish when they burrow. While the number of mud mounds spotted on our shores have seemingly declined in the last 25 years, we are still finding crayfish in streams and on the shorelines of the beaches on quiet days. The stream adjacent to Beach 2 is quite abundant with crayfish. Turn over a few rocks and you will quickly spot one of these "mini-lobsters" darting away for new cover.

## **Mysterious "Jelly Blobs" of Late Summer: Bryozoa in Lake Barcroft**

In late summer, lifeguards often get questions about mysterious "jelly blobs" seen in the water. These gelatinous organisms are colonies of microscopic animals from the phylum Bryozoa, also known as "moss animals." Bryozoa live in colonies, resembling coral, and reproduce asexually to form gelatinous sheets that eventually grow into the larger blobs noticed later in the season.

Bryozoa are filter feeders, using their crown-shaped zooids equipped with tiny cilia to capture zooplankton and phytoplankton from the water. This feeding behavior helps control algae populations, making them important bio-indicators of good water quality. Their presence here suggests the Lake's water is healthy, as these organisms thrive in clean environments.

While Bryozoa can be a nuisance in some engineered marine environments, they pose few problems at Lake Barcroft. They are, however, a crucial part of the ecosystem, providing food for fish, snails, and waterfowl. (Interestingly, some Bryozo-

an species are being studied for potential medical benefits, such as aiding Alzheimer's patients.)

As the weather cools, these colonies die off, but they will reemerge in the spring. With their roots in the Paleozoic Era, Bryozoa are among Earth's earliest life forms, making their presence here a fascinating reminder of the Lake's ecological balance.

## **Northern Watersnakes: Misunderstood but Harmless**

Our Lake is home to a large population of northern watersnakes, a non-venomous species common in Virginia. While they may appear threatening, they are harmless to humans. (These snakes can sometimes be mistaken for the venomous Northern Cottonmouth, which does not live in Lake Barcroft. The Cottonmouth is only found in southeastern Virginia.)

Northern watersnakes are identifiable by their round eyes and dark, often blotchy banding on their bodies. One species has a dark olive or brown color, another has lighter, reddish-brown

banding. The head of a northern watersnake is slightly triangular but not as broad and angular as a cottonmouth's. Additionally, unlike the cotton-mouth, which has vertical slit-shaped pupils and cannot fully submerge its body, northern watersnakes can swim underwater with only their heads breaking the surface.

These snakes mate from April to early June, and females give birth to live young in late summer, usually August and September. A female can carry up to 100 babies, though the average clutch size is 20-40. The juveniles are about 7-9 inches long at birth and quickly adapt to their environment.

Northern watersnakes are frequently seen swimming in Lake Barcroft, including around swimming areas, but lifeguards do not usually alert swimmers to their presence because they are non-venomous and pose no threat. While their population is considered secure, habitat loss and mistaken identity contribute to their decline in urban areas. It is important to respect these snakes and their role in keeping the Lake's ecosystem balanced.

---

## **Turtle Watching Tips**

- 1. Go Early or Late:** Turtles are most active in the early morning and late afternoon when the sun is lower. Basking turtles love warm, sunny spots but avoid the intense midday heat.
- 2. Bring Binoculars:** Turtles can be shy and quick to slip into the water if approached. Binoculars will let you observe them from a distance without disturbing their natural behavior.
- 3. Be Quiet and Stealthy:** Turtles have excellent hearing and are very sensitive to movement. Move slowly and quietly to avoid scaring them away.
- 4. Look for Logs and Rocks:** Many turtles bask on logs or rocks that are partially submerged in the water. Scan the Lake's edges and shallow areas for these spots. The peninsulas at Beaches 3 and 5 and Swift Island are well-known for hosting basking turtles.
- 5. Respect Their Space:** While it's exciting to see turtles up close, it's important to keep a respectful distance. Avoid handling turtles or disturbing their habitats, as this can cause them stress and harm.

## The Turtles of Lake Barcroft

Lake Barcroft is also home to a plentiful population of turtles. Cooters, painted turtles, sliders and common snapping turtles all enjoy the waters here. Whether you are walking in the Woman's Club Garden, strolling the footpath at Beach 5, paddling your kayak or SUP around Swift Island (aka Turtle Island), or cruising on your pontoon, you will likely spot these unique reptiles basking in the sun or gliding just beneath the surface.

While there are many species of turtles in the Lake, to the untrained eye most of them look alike. Almost all of them like to bask in the sun on logs, rocks, and low docks or seawalls. They generally mate between April and June and lay a clutch of multiple eggs. In Northern Virginia, cooters, painted turtles, and sliders grow to similar size with the cooter being the biggest as an adult around 15 inches. There are some subtle differences in behavior and diet. Cooters are herbivores, painted turtles are mostly carnivores, and sliders are omnivores. The key difference among them lies in coloring and shape of the shell. The top shell, or carapace, of a cooter is flat and sometimes depressed. Sliders have a smooth, oval carapace, and painted turtles are smooth and flat with a large straight ridge along their back.

The largest and most distinct of the Lake Barcroft turtles is the common snapping turtle. These prehistoric looking creatures are often seen swimming just below the surface or wallowing in shallow mud areas. Every June female snapping turtles can be spotted slowly moving to or from nests hundreds or thousands of feet from the water to lay a clutch of eggs. Residents midway up Jay Miller Drive have reported seeing a snapping turtle laying eggs in their yard. This is one turtle you do not want to handle without proper training. (Generally, there should be no need to handle a turtle.) Their powerful jaws, built to tear carrion and eat small mammals, can quickly cause deep tissue injuries if provoked. These turtles can live for decades with most adults having shells of 20-24 inches in length.

Learning more about the diverse turtle species that inhabit Lake Barcroft will provide a deeper appreciation for these unique creatures and the role they play in maintaining the Lake's ecosystem. Lake Barcroft offers excellent opportunities to observe these fascinating reptiles in their natural habitat. If you haven't taken time to notice, heed the tips on the previous page for the best chance at spotting these unique creatures.



LARRY GOLFER

Painted Turtle and Red-Eared Slider.



LARRY GOLFER

**2018**—A bald eagle spreads his wings – seen from Beach 3 looking north on the Lake.

WILDLIFE GUIDE

## Birds of Lake Barcroft

By Larry Golfer

For avid birdwatchers or simply those who enjoy the beauty of nature, Lake Barcroft offers a fascinating glimpse into the world of birds and the delicate balance of their ecosystem. Our picturesque Lake, with its abundant waters and lush surroundings in an urban forest, is home to a mix of raptors, waders, songbirds, waterfowl, and other species.

### Majestic Raptors and Fishing Birds

One of the most impressive sights at Lake Barcroft is the osprey. These large raptors, known for their remarkable fishing skills, are often seen diving into the water to catch a meal with their sharp talons. Their presence is a testament to the Lake's healthy ecosystem.

Bald eagles also thrill observers, soaring majestically above the Lake. Their powerful build and

piercing gaze embody the true spirit of raptors. For quite some time, eagles nested high up in a tree on Ridgeway Terrace, returning annually to raise a new brood. The young eagles would frequently sit with a parent in a tall tree across from Beach 4. Unfortunately, a powerful storm eventually took out the nest, and at this time eagles are not visibly nesting at the Lake.

The red-tailed hawk is another key player, frequently spotted circling the skies, using its keen eyesight to hunt small mammals and birds. This hawk's distinctive red tail feathers and loud, raspy call make it easy to recognize.

We often see the Cooper's hawk and the sharp-shinned hawk. To most observers, these two birds are almost indistinguishable from each other. Both species fly low and fast and, unlike most other hawks, specialize in preying on songbirds and

other smaller bird species. They are often seen darting through the trees on their hunt for prey.

Owls also reside in our community, including the barred owl and the great horned owl. The trees on Swift Island provide a haven for these magnificent creatures with their haunting hoots piercing the quiet of the night. The barred owl is very recognizable with its distinctive “who-cooks-for-you...who-cooks-for-you” hoot. The hoot of the great horned is more subtle and softer.

Other Lake fishing birds include the double-crested cormorant, known for its diving and slow, noisy take-offs from the water, and the skittish and infrequently seen belted kingfisher. This bird, with its striking blue-gray plumage and distinctive call, likes to dive headfirst into the water to catch fish.

In addition, one can occasionally see a pied-billed grebe, a small, diving bird that quickly vanishes underwater seeking small fish, crustaceans, and invertebrates, only to pop up some distance away.

### **Graceful Waders: Herons**

The great blue heron is arguably the signature bird of Lake Barcroft. These tall, stately birds can be seen wading through the shallows around the

Lake or standing statue-like at attention at the Lake's edges, patiently stalking their prey. Their long legs and necks make them well-adapted to their aquatic hunting grounds. Great blues regularly nest on Swift Island, and one can hear the almost prehistoric-sounding squawks of both parents and their young during the springtime breeding season. It is a magnificent sight to see them take off and fly gracefully across the Lake, as if in slow motion.

Another member of the heron family residing in our midst, yet more elusive, is the green heron. This smaller heron can be seen crouching and stretching its neck to strike at fish. Observing their quick movements can provide quite the thrill.

The black-crowned night heron adds a touch of nocturnal mystery. These birds, with their dramatic black and white plumage and red eyes, are often seen at dusk and at dawn, but occasionally during the daytime, too, stealthily hunting along the water's edge in the brush or perched nearby within the tree cover.

Sometimes, a great egret, with its showy white plumage and graceful movements, makes an appearance, providing a stunning addition to the heron families more commonly seen here.

### **Songbirds, Woodpeckers and Migrants**

Lake Barcroft is also home to a variety of common songbirds, including (and this is not a complete list) the American robin, Carolina wren, song sparrow, house sparrow, northern cardinal, chickadee, common finch, house finch, house wren, northern mockingbird, goldfinch, the occasionally seen purple finch, vireo, gnatcatcher, tufted titmouse, white-breasted nuthatch, and dark-eyed junco. Other birds often seen include European starlings, mourning doves, common grackles, catbirds, towhees, hummingbirds and crows.

The American robin, with its characteristic orange breast and belly, is one of the most familiar song-



LARRY GOLFER

2025—Great Blue Heron. By Larry Golfer, 2025.



2025—American Robin.



2017—Common yellow-throated warbler

ers are known for their distinctive colors, their call and their habit of drumming on trees and metal chimney caps. It is rare to see the yellow-bellied sapsuckers, but the red-bellies are common. This woodpecker is distinctive with its bright red cap and ladder-like black and white pattern on its back. The largest woodpecker in Lake Barcroft is the pileated; its loud varied calls can be heard high up in the tree canopy, although it occasionally does come down to suet feeders that residents have set up in their gardens. The pileated is striking with its pointy red crest and loud, resonant drumming. Its presence is a sign of mature forests.

Migrating birds provide a delight for resident bird watchers each year. They include a variety of wood warblers. These are very small birds, with the males displaying very colorful plumage. Warblers include the yellow-rumped, northern parula, black-throated blue, black-throated green, American redstart, and black and white. Warblers add a melodic element to the forest's symphony with their sweet, whistling song.

Other migrants during breeding season include the scarlet tanager, its brilliant red feathers and contrasting black wings a treat for keen-eyed birdwatchers. Also, the rose-breasted grosbeak, Baltimore and orchard orioles, purple martin, and purple finch all make appearances here. Finally, the tree swallow, with its iridescent blue-green back and white underside, is a common summer resident often seen darting in small flocks over the Lake catching insects on the wing. The barn swallow, with its striking blue back, reddish throat, and long, forked tail, is another aerial acrobat that's a joy to watch as it swoops and glides in search of food. Finally, the "flying cigar" silhouette of the chimney swift is a common sight all summer long as large flocks chatter noisily on the wing as they feed over the Lake.

## Ducks and Waterfowl

Lake Barcroft hosts a variety of ducks and waterfowl. The mallard is a familiar sight with the male displaying its iridescent green head and

birds, often seen hopping around lawns in search of worms. The Carolina wren, a small yet bold bird, fills the air with its loud and melodious song. Their distinctive white eyebrows and energetic behavior make these birds a delight to watch.

Woodpeckers include (in order of size from smaller to larger) the downy, the hairy, the northern flicker, the yellow-bellied sapsucker, the red-bellied, and the pileated. Downy and hairy males sport red-spotted crowns. In fact, the downy woodpecker is the smallest woodpecker in North America; it flits around tree trunks and branches, tapping away in search of insects. Northern flick-

vocalizing with its distinctive quack. In winter, the hooded merganser, a duck with a slim and pointed bill, serrated for catching fish, and dramatic black-and-white crest makes its presence known. Sometimes confused with the merganser is the bufflehead duck, a buoyant, large-headed duck that abruptly vanishes and resurfaces as it feeds. Bufflehead males look black-and white from a distance. But a closer look at the head reveals glossy green and purple setting off a striking white patch. The wood duck distinguishes itself with a vivid splash of color, with its ornate glossy and iridescent green, blue, violet, and chestnut head cut with white stripes, a chestnut breast speckled in white, and striking red eyes. One may also hear its distinctive whistling call. The female is warm brown and grey with its characteristic white teardrop around the eye.

Commonly seen in pairs or larger flocks is the Canada goose, its black head and neck and white chinstrap a familiar sight. They frequently fly



ALL PHOTOS BY LARRY GOLFER

2025—Wood Ducks



2025—Geese and goslings



2025—Osprey caught a fish

either close to the water or in a V-formation up in the sky, making their distinctive honking calls.

Finally, there is our own unusual-looking solo muscovy duck, a familiar site hanging around female mallards. The muscovy is the largest duck at our Lake, predominantly black and white in color. Its bill can be yellow, red, pink, black, or any mixture of these colors. The muscovy is an invasive species and is not native to the area (or even the U.S. outside of a sliver of Texas along the lower Rio Grande).

*Contributors: Thanks to Nolan Stokes, Greg Knadle, Marcia Grabowski for their expert input and editing.*



LARRY GOLFER

**2012—**Deer families have become common visitors in our yards. But seeing a large buck like this is still a dramatic and startling experience.

WILDLIFE GUIDE

## Mammals of Lake Barcroft

By Greg Knadle

Lake Barcroft is home to a surprisingly diverse range of mammals. These animals can be found in our yards and forests, in the Lake, beneath our feet, over our heads and occasionally in our homes and other buildings. This guide will help you recognize and appreciate them.

### In Our Yards and Forests

White-tailed deer are one of the most common and recognizable mammals in the neighborhood. Known for their distinctive white tails, which they raise when alarmed, they graze on a variety of vegetation, including leaves, fruits, and twigs. These adaptable herbivores can run up to 30 miles an hour and are skilled swimmers. Their presence adds to the natural beauty of the area, though their grazing can sometimes pose challenges for gardeners. They become more visible (and dangerous for vehicles) in the breeding sea-

son (October and November) when bucks are on the constant hunt for does.

Eastern cottontail rabbits are frequent yard visitors, with their fluffy white tails and timid nature. These rabbits thrive in grasslands, woodlands, and urban edges, feeding on grasses, herbs and garden plants. They are critical prey for predators such as foxes, hawks, and snakes, and their zigzag running pattern helps them evade capture. Because they are such a desired prey species, their populations can go through cycles of abundance and scarcity.

American opossums, North America's only marsupial, is a nocturnal visitor that helps control pests, including ticks, in the neighborhood. Recognizable by their prehensile tails and opposable thumbs, they are excellent climbers and often scavenge for carrion or insects — including eating

a LOT of ticks! When threatened, they “play dead,” a behavior that confuses predators. Their role as pest controllers makes them valuable in urban ecosystems.

Deer mice are a small but essential part of the Lake Barcroft ecosystem. With their bicolored fur and large eyes, they are primarily nocturnal and feed on seeds, fruits, insects, and fungi. These agile rodents contribute to seed dispersal and soil health, making them important for forest regeneration. They also serve as prey for many predators, including owls and snakes. They occasionally sneak into our homes when the weather starts to get cold.

Eastern gray squirrels are a common sight in the neighborhood, often seen darting up trees or burying nuts. Their bushy tails and playful behavior make them a favorite among wildlife watchers. By burying seeds and nuts, they inadvertently aid forest regeneration. However, they are known to raid bird feeders and gardens, sometimes causing frustration for homeowners.

Southern flying squirrels are fascinating nocturnal gliders rarely seen due to their nighttime habits. They aren’t really capable of powered flight like a bat, but using a membrane called a patagium, they glide between trees, covering impressive distances. These squirrels feed on nuts, fruits, fungi, and insects, contributing to seed and spore dispersal. In winter, they often gather in groups for warmth, highlighting their social nature.

Eastern chipmunks, with their striped backs and cheek pouches, are busy and energetic residents of yards and gardens. They store food in underground burrows, which also help aerate the soil. Chipmunks are vocal, often scolding intruders with high-pitched calls, and serve as prey for hawks, foxes, and snakes. It’s one of the most common small mammals in the neighborhood, and you can often hear their high-pitched alarm calls, which are often misidentified as coming from birds.

Raccoons are highly intelligent and adaptable mammals often spotted at night. They are extremely common in the neighborhood but are not seen as often as the red fox and other mammals because they are very nocturnal. With their iconic black facial masks and dexterous paws, raccoons are adept at foraging for food, including fruits, insects, small animals, and human refuse. They are a critical part of the ecosystem as scavengers but can cause issues by raiding trash bins.

Woodchucks, or groundhogs, are large burrowing rodents that exist in the neighborhood but are not at all common and are rarely sighted. Known for their extensive burrows, they contribute to soil aeration and plant growth. These herbivores feed on grasses, fruits, and crops. They hibernate in winter, surviving on fat reserves accumulated during the summer.

Coyotes are shy but resilient predators that occasionally roam the edges of Lake Barcroft. These intelligent animals help control populations of

**2025**—The number of red foxes waxes and wanes over the years.



LARRY GOLFER

small mammals, birds, and insects. They are rarely seen due to their elusive nature, and unlike their counterparts in the western part of the country, eastern coyotes rarely howl or bark. Coyotes are a testament to the adaptability of wildlife in human-altered landscapes and are found in every U.S. state except one. (You can probably guess which one.)

Red foxes, with their striking red fur and bushy tails, are solitary and adaptable predators. They feed on small mammals, birds, insects, and fruits, making them opportunistic hunters. Their dens are often located in secluded areas, where they raise their young. Foxes contribute to the regulation of prey populations, helping maintain ecological balance in the neighborhood. The fox population here is constantly in a cyclical battle with the wildlife disease mange, caused by mites. When fox populations get too high, the mites are more easily transferred between individuals, a portion of which die, leaving a lower number of foxes with mange until the population goes up again.

American black bears have been rumored to visit the area, although sightings remain unconfirmed. I call it the “Curious Case of the Barcroft Bear.” I would love to see a photograph that would confirm these sightings. These bears are typically shy and avoid humans but may be drawn to food sources like trash or bird feeders. They play a vital role in the ecosystem by dispersing seeds and maintaining forest health. If a bear does appear in the neighborhood, it’s likely a young male seeking new territory after leaving its mother.

## In Our Lake

Beavers, North America’s largest rodent are known for their ability to transform landscapes by building dams and lodges. These structures create ponds that provide habitats for many species and improve water quality. Beavers feed on bark, twigs, and aquatic vegetation, and their activities are vital for maintaining biodiversity, though they can sometimes conflict with human

land use. Lakefront homeowners have lost trees to our beavers. The bottom four feet of trees near the Lake should be surrounded with chicken wire for protection. If you have been boating near a beaver, you may have heard a loud SNAP as the beaver slaps its tail against the surface of the water as an alarm to other beavers in the area.

Muskrats are smaller semi-aquatic rodents often seen swimming in the Lake. Unlike beavers, muskrats’ tails are long and narrow rather than flat. Muskrats build dome-shaped lodges from vegetation and mud, creating shelter for themselves and other species. Their herbivorous diet includes aquatic plants, though they may occasionally consume small animals.

River otters are playful semi-aquatic mammals that have been spotted and photographed in Lake Barcroft. Sleek and agile, they are expert swimmers that feed on fish, crustaceans, and amphibians. Their scat, often found near docks, is fairly easy to recognize because it contains visible fish scales. Otters are highly social and often play together, sliding down mud banks or splashing in the water. If you are lucky enough to see one, you may only get a glimpse as they are almost always moving — in the water and out. None have been seen here in recent years.

## In the Soil Beneath Our Feet

Star-nosed moles are easily recognized by the fleshy, star-shaped appendages on their noses. These sensory organs help them locate prey in wet soils and marshes. Capable of swimming, these moles feed on aquatic invertebrates as well as worms and insects. Their burrowing aerates the soil, benefiting plant growth.

Eastern moles are solitary burrowers with velvety gray fur and spade-like forelimbs. Adapted for life underground, they feed on insects, earthworms, and other soil invertebrates. While their tunneling helps improve soil health, it can be a nuisance in lawns and gardens.



LARRY GOLFER

2016—Muskrats feast on Lake plants.

Short-tailed shrews are small, venomous mammals that prey on insects, earthworms, and small vertebrates. They're one of the few mammals that have poisonous saliva. The venom paralyzes their prey but keeps them alive. They store these zombie meals in underground tunnels and spaces under rocks and trees. Stockpiling prey is a smart move considering that shrews have an incredibly high metabolism and must eat frequently to survive.

Least shrews, one of the smallest mammals in North America, are an insectivore that live in burrows, rock piles, or fallen logs. Though rarely seen, they are vital for controlling insect populations. I cannot confirm that they are in the neighborhood, but I'm certain enough to include them in this guide.

## Over Our Heads

Red bats are tree-dwelling bats with reddish fur that often looks frosted. They roost in tree foliage, camouflaging as dead leaves, and feed on night-flying insects such as moths. Red bats are solitary and migrate seasonally, traveling long distances.

Little brown bats are social, insectivorous bats known for their small size and glossy brown fur. Roosting in caves, buildings, and trees, they consume large numbers of mosquitoes and other insects. Their populations are currently threatened by white-nose syndrome, a fungal disease.

Big brown bats are robust bats that feed on agricultural pests, providing valuable ecosystem services. With wingspans of up to 13 inches, they are highly adaptable and often roost in buildings or caves. Unlike many other bats, they are less affected by white-nose syndrome. Both little brown bats and big brown bats will sometimes inhabit manmade bat houses that are hung near the top of the side of a house or on a tall pole. If we were to put up larger, specifically designed bat houses at each of the beaches and common areas, we might reduce the number of mosquitoes and other insects significantly.

## Occasionally in Our Houses and Other Buildings

House mice are small, adaptable rodents often living close to humans. With their ability to squeeze through tiny spaces, they can be challenging to keep out of homes. These prolific home invaders can fit through an opening the diameter of a dime! House mice are prolific breeders and are known for spreading disease and damaging food supplies.

Norway rats, or brown rats, are a large, burly rodent often seen near human structures. They burrow in soil or rocks and are omnivorous, consuming grains, garbage, and small animals. I have seen them in the landscaping rocks below my birdfeeders, taking advantage of the spilled sunflower seeds. While they play a role in consuming waste, they can spread diseases and damage property.

Black rats, or roof rats, are sleek, agile climbers often found in attics or high places. Feeding primarily on fruits and grains, they pose risks to both health and crops. I have seen several in my backyard camped out under the bird feeders with the Norway rat, but they aren't common.

2018



A massive tree crushed this house on Stoneybrae.

LARRY GOLFER

The rebuilt house below.

2025



TOM DONLAN

## 6. Newsworthy Events

The last 25 years have seen a series of notable Lake events such as the development of several new residential lots, a rabid beaver attack, tragic drownings, the Derecho, boat and other water incidents, fires, and damage from falling trees and limbs. Here are a few of our newsworthy events:

### Water Incidents

In 2000, four trespassers in their early 20s stole a canoe and capsized near Beach 4. Three of the four made it to land, but one man died.

In 2009, the body of a Culmore man in his early 20s was found floating in the Lake after a heavy storm. It is believed that he was a gang-related homicide victim, not a drowning victim.

In about 2012, the body of an elderly resident, who regularly swam in the evening hours, was found in the Lake. He may have had a medical emergency that caused his death.

In 2013, a guest was fishing off a boat, and his body was later found floating in the Lake. It is not known how he entered the water or lost his life.

In 2016, a teenage guest dove from a small inflatable skiff being towed behind a pontoon boat, intending to swim to shore. However, he panicked and submerged before he could be saved by his friends.

In about 2018, a non-resident teenager survived after entering the Lake while suffering a mental health crisis. A police helicopter located her in shallow water. She was treated for hypothermia.

### Rabid Beaver Attack

In September 2012, Lillian Peterson, an 83-year-old non-resident, was bitten by a 35-pound rabid beaver, while she was swimming in the Lake. Fortunately, her friend Mike Korin was fishing nearby and battled the beaver with a canoe paddle, a stick, and his bare hands. Ms. Peterson was hospitalized with bites on her left calf and thumb and puncture wounds on her arms and legs.

Mike noticed the beaver as it was swimming toward Ms. Peterson and immediately headed to her aid. His boat was attacked during the struggle that continued as the frenzied



**2025**—The Lake's lifeguard team is well-trained in water rescue and emergency medical care from minor cuts and bee stings to quickly treating more serious injuries until the ambulance arrives.

animal returned again and again. Mike ultimately was able to net the beaver, trapping it for the Animal Control officers. The beaver was euthanized and tested positive for rabies, which required Ms. Peterson to endure a painful series of anti-rabies shots.

Ms. Peterson was quoted in news reports saying, "There is no way I will swim in that place again."

Fortunately, this was the only beaver bite in Lake Barcroft history. And, happily, beaver attacks on swimmers anywhere are exceedingly rare.

## Water Safety Emergencies

Our water safety personnel regularly respond to boat-related and other emergencies — capsized boats (at least one with a panicky non-swimmer), dead pontoon boats, and twice, pontoon boat fires. At least three times a rowing scull has hit a swimmer, causing minor injuries and there have been close calls with swimmers and pontoon boats, one requiring medical transport by ambulance.

Twice in the last 25 years, cars have driven onto Beach 4 while people were sunbathing. Once a pickup truck's brakes failed while parking, and most recently a man experiencing a medical episode crashed into a bench.

Our lifeguards are trained as emergency medical responders, making them well prepared to handle minor cuts and bruises and other medical issues. Water safety personnel have treated minor foot cuts from broken shells, thorns, or glass as well as deep lacerations such as those caused by a boat propeller or the skeg of a sailboard. One time they treated a resident for

burns when the man used too much lighter fluid to start his grill.

Our personnel have also handled seizures in the water, on a boat, and on the beach. Multiple times they have removed or stabilized fishhooks lodged in various body parts, the corner of a child's eye being the most serious. Lifeguards have splinted broken extremities including a boy who broke his wrist skateboarding at Beach 1, and a child who broke his arm in the 3-legged race on Labor Day.

And our Water Safety personnel assisted a woman who injured her leg when a driver did not see her while backing out of a parking space.

Lifeguards frequently treat heat exhaustion and occasionally the more serious heat stroke. An elderly man was experiencing chest pains in the parking lot at Beach 4. The lifeguards monitored his blood pressure and vitals while treating him with emergency oxygen until an ambulance arrived.

Lifeguards also have treated bee stings, dog bites, a snake bite, and fish nibbles.

## The Derecho Storm

In the early morning of June 29, 2012, a severe storm called a Derecho hit the Washington area.

It was a doozy. The high temperature in Washington was 104 degrees, among the hottest temperatures ever recorded here. At 10 p.m. it was 91 degrees, and we were sweltering in suffocating humidity (dew point 75). The storm had an average forward speed of 65 mph and hit us with an initial blast of 60-80 mph wind, with periodic gusts of 50 mph and higher bursts for up to 15 minutes. All this accompanied by violent rain downbursts. The Washington Post called the storm "one of the most widespread and ruinous severe thunderstorms in the diary of our region's extreme weather." So many trees went down throughout the area that most regional roads were impassable.

Unsurprisingly, many trees in our community were toppled and electricity was lost for days. The continuing soaring heat and high humidity made conditions super uncomfortable and for some, dangerous. But again, unsurprisingly, neighbors helped neighbors, no Lake resident was seriously injured. After several days, utilities were returned to service, downed trees were removed from the roads, and Lake life returned more or less to normal.

## Derecho Stories

Several Lake residents shared their Derecho experiences. Here are a few of them, in their own (slightly edited) words:

*A 150-year-old oak was lifted out of the ground and thrown into our one-story Whispering Lane house. When it fell, it destroyed about half the house and sheared off the tops of the six mature tulip poplars in our backyard and the mature maple in the front. Not only were we without a home, but our beautiful, wooded property was now completely devoid of trees. Fortunately, we were out of town during the storm; no one was hurt. And this is where our story begins ... not with the storm, but with the aftermath. It's a story about the kindness of Lake Barcroft.*

*My late husband, toddler daughter and I moved to this wonderful community in 1993. Over the years we had become close friends with neighbors on our street and on others. It was our next-door neighbor who called to tell us the tree had just fallen into our house. It was night and pouring rain. Despite the darkness and weather, she and other neighbors immediately rallied to salvage valuables, scrambling over the large tree which now occupied what was left of our house and helping a contractor cover it with a tarp while we hurried back to NOVA.*

*The next day, the sun came out, and we were able to see the extent of the damage. We had an intact living room, dining*

*room, kitchen and one bath. The bedrooms and hall closets with all our belongings were buried and likely destroyed under the tree's trunk and canopy. Within hours, anonymous neighbors left bags of clothing for us, knowing all we had was what we had packed for the weekend away. We stayed in the homes of two Jay Miller Drive families while we figured out where we would live during the reconstruction of our house. Our next-door neighbor took our then 5-year-old son to the beach for a week to keep him occupied while we dealt with contractors and the myriad administrative tasks that ensued in the immediate aftermath of the storm. For more than a week as we cleared out the tree and the damaged contents of our house, neighborhood friends and strangers stopped by to see how they could help.*

*We have never forgotten how fortunate we were that fateful night. That no one was hurt was a miracle to be sure. The real blessing was the compassion bestowed upon us in so many ways.*

*J. Mueller  
Whispering Lane*

*During the Derecho, Greentree Drive was isolated by a large tree that fell and blocked the road between Beachway and Greentree. No way to get in or out by car.*

*However, it ended up being another example of how wonderful our community is.*



LARRY GOLFER

**2012**—On June 29, with temperatures at a record-breaking 104 degrees, a massive thunderstorm system with heavy rains and winds up 90 mph shot through the entire Middle Atlantic. The Derecho downed trees and powerlines closing our roads. Our power was out for days in 100-degree heat.

*Neighbors took care of the senior members of our street by bringing them bottled water and throwing away refrigerated food that had gone bad due to the lack of electricity.*

*One neighbor went door to door for several days delivering bottles of water.*

*Every night, everyone on the street brought food from their freezers and refrigerators, which was going to be wasted, and we barbecued it. We were all sharing and enjoying dinner together. We were laughing and trying to make the best out of a bad situation.*

*The lack of air conditioning was very hard and after a few days, our daughter came to our rescue. She picked up my husband and me at the end the street beyond the fallen tree. We spent a few days with her and her family until electricity was restored and the fallen tree removed.*

*We actually missed those evening block parties!!*

Marie-France Smith  
Greentree Drive

*The Derecho came out of nowhere. I was on my computer and Diane was watching TV when she called for me to come into the living room. The wind had suddenly picked up, and before we knew it, the trees outside our picture window were bending nearly sideways. It was interesting to watch until the power went out and we realized that we probably should move away from the window.*

*We went downstairs where we discovered the strong smell of gas. Our first reaction was to open windows and doors, and even though the power had gone out, we went around unplugging everything in case the power came back on and generated a spark. We called the gas company and were told that because fallen trees were blocking roads, it would be several hours before anyone could come and check it out. In the meantime, they advised us to leave the house. Unfortunately, the Derecho was still raging, so there wasn't anywhere we could go safely.*

*Moreover, we were told that if and when the gas company arrived, we needed to be there to let them in. So, we stayed in the house, nervously waiting for the gas company's arrival. It was around midnight when they showed up. They checked upstairs and downstairs and couldn't find the source of the gas smell. Then they went outside and Voila! It turned out the gas smell was coming from our next-door neighbor's gas-powered generator. The pilot light had blown out, but when the power went out, the generator kicked on, spewing gas that was blowing into our house! No one was home next door, but fortunately the gas company was able to turn off the generator.*

*The impact of the Derecho lingered for days. Trees were down. Houses were damaged. Yet, despite power still being out in some areas, the July 4 parade took place as planned and afterwards, incredibly, many folks (including us) invited people to come over to grill the food that was thawing out in their freezers and then went on to enjoy the July 4 fireworks on the Lake.*

*Quite a week!*

Seth Davidson  
Pinetree Terrace

*During the Derecho, we lived at the very top of Dockser Terrace. No electricity, no water. Everyone shared grocery trips, held group cookouts to use up refrigerated items, traveled to the drug store for errands, picked up dry ice. But with no water, the need for sanitary services was growing desperate despite our trips to my workplace for showers, etc. A lightbulb idea struck, and we loaded buckets and containers into the car trunks. We found a number of our clever neighbors at Beach 1. We all filled our buckets and drove them home to fill the toilet tanks. Presto! Flushing with Lake water. We never felt luckier to live by our beautiful and now very useful Lake.*

Linda Haake and Holly Schneider  
Dockser Terrace

*Many viewed the Derecho as a fierce and unprecedeted storm that left devastation in its wake. But for me it was the end of an era. My dear friend's funeral — at which I was to speak — was the next day.*

*As the winds roared outside, an early draft of my eulogy printed out just as the power cut off, leaving it incomplete. The slideshow chronicling his life couldn't be finished. By morning, downed trees blocked Dockser and Waterway, trapping the other speakers and family members. Yet, through carpooling and navigating these obstacles, we made our way to Murphy Funeral Home. No formal announcement was made, but word spread quickly, and every seat was filled by Lake Barcroft neighbors. We sat in the stifling heat and darkness, listening to stories about my wonderful friend.*

*During the ceremony, we learned of another hurdle. The cemetery was set to close early due to storm damage, forcing us to rush the long procession through blocked roads and Seven Corners without working traffic signals. With determination, we arrived just minutes before the gates shut. At his gravesite, we were met by two colossal oak trees, splintered and smashed to pieces.*

*He fought death as much as he loved life and did not want to go. Among our neighbors that day, many of us noticed the*

## COVID 2020–2022

The Covid pandemic hit in late March 2020, hospitals filled, schools and most businesses closed, many worked from home. But at the Lake, we were luckier than most.



FAMILY PHOTO

**2020**—Three families on Jay Miller Drive and Tallwood Terrace set up a schoolroom for their kids for a month. School reopened virtually in April 2020.



**2020**—Neighbors met for evening, end-of-driveway get togethers (staying 6 feet apart).



GEORGE MCLENNAN

**2020**—And when the beaches opened, we could swim, boat, fish, and relax in relative safety. 2020 – Lifeguards wore red Covid masks.

*storm's intensity mirrored his spirit — unyielding, wild, and unforgettable.*

David Goldstein  
Lakeview Drive

*My five-year-old granddaughter and I were already sleeping in my bedroom with large windows on two sides. I knew there was a storm, and woke from time to time, until there was something I had never heard before — thunder claps back-to-back, with mere seconds between the loud roars and constant lightning. It was very dramatic, and I should have been afraid, but I was mesmerized by the unique storm.*

*Then there was loud knocking on my bedroom door and my three young roommates, all in their 20s, said, "We've come to*

*get you; it's not safe up here with all that glass!" One of the guys scooped up my little sleeping granddaughter and the other two grabbed the mattress from the bed and we went downstairs. All five of us spent several hours in the room with the fewest windows, just amazed by the storm. When it had finally died down, they again scooped up my granddaughter and the mattress and we returned to the bedroom.*

*She never woke up!*

*It was quite a night and a few very hot days without electricity. I am grateful that it wasn't worse.*

Sally Determan  
Pinetree Terrace

## New Neighbors

In 1974, LBA's predecessor (with the consent of the community) sold a parcel of land south of Beach 2 to a corporation created by a group of Lake residents for purposes of taking ownership of the land and then constructing a recreation facility. These Lake residents then created a second corporation, the Lake Barcroft Recreation Center, which operated the facility, including a pool and tennis courts, for the use of Lake and non-Lake members. (All of this is described in more detail in the Tony Bracken's Lake Barcroft History.) However, by the mid-1990s the Rec Center was no longer economically feasible, and the parcel was ultimately sold to a developer, with appropriate restrictive covenants and conservation easements to enable the LBA to protect the environment of the Lake community and to preserve as much natural property as possible.

Twelve lots — all with Lake privileges because the land had been part of the original Lake subdivision — were sold to new homeowners between 2004 and 2006, and 12 new families on Tennis Court and Recreation Lane were welcomed to the Lake.

## Losses from Climate Change

Over the last 25 years there have been losses primarily due to climate change or factors beyond our control. Many of our large trees have died or needed to be removed. Some fell with significant damage to houses and cars. Some trees, sadly, were removed unnecessarily.

Many fewer of us are sailing on the Lake as the winds have changed and lessened. The days of sailing races on the Lake are long gone. Apparently also gone for good are the days of full-Lake freezes sufficient to support ice-skating from end to end. Missed are the many ice hockey pick-up games, the bedsheets kids held up for "ice sailing," and the neighbors offering hot toddies and hot chocolate to the skaters. The snowfalls, too, which provided so many hours of fun for our kids, are much less frequent and fulsome than they were before 2000. The summer lightning bugs are now rarer. We don't see many butterflies or nearly as many birds as we did before 2000.

Sad changes indeed.



2018—Trees were pulled out by their roots on Woodland Circle.



**2000**—After the Barcroft Recreation Center closed, a dozen new houses in Parcel A became part of Lake Barcroft.

## 7. Lake Barcroft Real Estate

The recent period of our history has seen significant changes in many aspects of our community, but none more substantial than those in our home properties.

Today, there are a total of 1,045 home lots within the Lake Barcroft Association (some as the result of subdivision of larger properties and the 12 home lots created in Parcel A). In 2000, there were still a handful of vacant lots, but now there are no lots without a structure. A house on the last vacant lot was completed in 2025.

For most of the first 50 years of our history, there were relatively few major renovations of existing homes, and it appears that in that period, no house was razed for a new one to be built on the same lot. As of 2000, the vast majority of the houses built in the mid-1950s and early 1960s were well-maintained but were not significantly larger than they had been when originally constructed.

During the last 25 years, a good number of older houses were enlarged and renovated, many very substantially. This includes 17 Lakefront houses (out of a total of 273) that were completely razed, with new houses built on the same lots.

The value of Lake property has risen enormously. The total for all the residential properties per the 2024 Fairfax County tax assessments (\$1,370,412,590) is well more than three times the assessment total in 2000 (\$401,749,170). During the same period, the median price of houses in the United States increased by 102%.

Some of the extraordinary increase in assessed valuation of Lake property is undoubtedly attributable to the renovations and additions. Some, to a very limited extent, reflect the addition of the Parcel A lots. And some may be from more accurate County assessment procedures.

But the bulk of the significant difference in values between LBA housing properties and housing properties across the USA is the result of market realities — good old supply and demand. People want to live in Lake Barcroft, and many Lake residents don't want to leave. In 2000, only 19 new residents joined us; in 2023, the number of new move-ins was 35, and during the interim years, move-ins were mostly within this range. In a community of 1,045 homes, that isn't much turnover.



TOM DONLAN

In 1987, Roberta and Stephen Guinta wanted a Lakefront home and found an owner willing to do a private sale. He just needed to rent the house for a year. In 1988, they moved from Tallwood Terrace to Lakeview Drive. Over the years, they realized they wanted a new house on the same lot. By 2002, the project was underway, but their original contractor had to be replaced. Finally, after much delay – and with a new contractor – things were back on track. They Guintas moved out of the house. The tear-down date was near their daughter Tricia's birthday, so Trisha and friends had a house-wide graffiti birthday party. Problems with the tear-down permits caused more delay. But in 2005, at last, the house was finally finished.



FAMILY PHOTO



FAMILY PHOTO

# How We Found Our Lake House



**2002**—Lake Barcroft has been called the best kept secret in DC, Maryland and Virginia real estate.



TOM DONLAN

Some of the residents who joined us since 2000 shared their stories of finding their Lake homes, both for a Newsletter article and for this History. Here are a few of them.

*In January 2005, my husband and I had one week in DC to look for houses. After a cold and unsuccessful week of looking, my husband found our home on the MLS. We had no idea it was on a lake. We checked it out, and since it had a garage and was the most spacious one we had seen all week, we purchased it. While going through the closing documents, I noticed that a canoe conveyed with the house and wondered why the owners wanted to leave us a canoe. After moving in we discovered that we had moved into this wonderful Lake community. We (including our Realtor) had no idea. It was such a blessing!*

*Brandy and Doug Beekman  
Crosswoods Drive*

*In 2013, I was trying to get my baby to fall asleep, so I drove around looking at houses and accidentally stumbled upon Lake Barcroft.*

*Leonardo Cacatian  
Cavalier Corridor*

*My husband and I had been living in Pentagon City for seven years and had never heard of Lake Barcroft [until] 2012 when I saw on the news that a woman had been bitten by a rabid beaver. After my initial thought of "How terrible," my next thought was "Where are there beavers nearby?" I teach high school in Arlington and asked my students [about] "the beaver story," which led to a discussion on where there is a lake nearby. Some of my students were familiar with the Lake and the fact that you had to live there to use it. In the spring, my husband and I had started house hunting, and, on a lark, we took a Sunday drive and found Lake Barcroft. Another Sunday drive produced our home on Stoneybrae. So, yes, Thank You "Rabid Beaver."*

*Carol Show  
Stoneybrae Drive*

*Reuben and I used to live down the street on the other side of Route 7. One day perhaps eight years ago, as I was searching something on Google Maps, I saw the Lake on the map and called Reuben. "There is a lake nearby!" We were so excited and on the following weekend, decided to go sightseeing. We reached Beach 1, parked there, and walked on the beach in complete awe*

*and surprise. Not too soon, the lifeguard on duty politely told us that this was a private beach and asked us to leave. Ever since, we told ourselves that one fine day we would buy a property in the Lake Barcroft community — which we did over a year ago. We are delighted to be part of such a fine community of neighbors. Nowadays, we happily wave our beach tag at the lifeguard and enjoy the beach with our children.*

*Eleonore Aubry  
Pinetree Terrace*

*I married into Lake Barcroft! Before I dated Alison, I lived in Steppes Court (behind the Baileys firehouse) and had once made a wrong turn [somewhere] in Lake Barcroft. Of course, I got lost and never went back until I met Alison and visited her parents' house on Barger Drive (which we bought in 2003).*

*Shane Oleson  
Crosswoods Circle*

*I didn't find Lake Barcroft. Lake Barcroft found me. I spent the first five years of my life on Juniper Lane, from 1958 to 1963. I've since asked my mother, if she knew Lake Barcroft was there and she said, "Yes, we knew there was a Lake or something down there but we never really had anything to do with it." Flash forward to a February 2012 weekend when my fiancé and I were house hunting for a place to join our two families. I'd printed out MapQuest directions to an open house on Waterway Drive, but first I wanted to see if I could find the house of my early childhood. We found it and, parked in front, I turned my attention to the directions in my hand. They said the open house was right down the street from my old house. While taking a quick tour of Barcroft amenities — specifically Beach 3 — a gentle snow started to fall. My wife, Nancy, and I looked at each other knowingly because, as sure as eggs is eggs, we knew we'd found home. Or, in this case, home had found us.*

*Chris and Nancy Findlay  
Waterway Drive*



LARRY GOLFER

**2020**—Beach 4 offers this perfect picnic spot.

# 8. Staff

## Chris Lawson

Lake Manager, 1989—2021

LARRY GOLFER



2004—Chris Lawson

on Lakeview Drive, across from Beach 2, the house where Chris grew up and lived until she retired.

Chris' mother, MaryKathryn Kubat, was the volunteer Treasurer for Barcroft Lake Management Association, Inc. (BAR-LAMA), one of LBA's predecessor's, from 1973 to 1975. In 1972, her mother also became the paid manager for Barcroft Beach, Inc. (BBI), another LBA predecessor, which then held the title to the Lakebed and beaches. MaryKathryn served there until her death in 1989.

Between 1983 and 1989, Chris volunteered as an assistant to her mother, learning the ins and outs of the Manager's job. When her mother died, Chris was the logical choice for Lake Manager.

A major responsibility of the Lake Manager (then and now) is to coordinate the monthly LBA Board meetings. She prepared and distributed packages of all the paperwork for each meeting to the Board members. She assisted the LBA Secretary by taking her own notes at each meeting. She assisted in logistical presentations. Meetings were wonderfully convenient, since they were always held at Chris's Lakeview Drive house where she and her mother had created a comfortable and welcoming office/meeting room.

In addition to Board meeting preparations, Chris had numerous other responsibilities, including: (1) preparing and

mailing out the annual dues notices; (2) for real estate sales, making sure that the seller's dues payments were up-to-date or whether any outstanding payments needed to be collected at settlement; (3) annually mailing out beach tags and car stickers to homeowner members; (4) running the beach party reservation program; (5) paying homeowner association bills; and (6) coordinating logistics for the Board Election meeting in February and the Civic Affairs meeting in October.

Chris also became the all-purpose clearing house for untold numbers of homeowners' calls and complaints — from replacing lost boat stickers to reporting downed power lines.

From the time that Chris' mother served as Lake Manager, and then for the first half of Chris' career as Lake Manager, the position was seen as a part-time job, with only a part-time salary. However, in 2012, it became clear to the Board that Chris was doing full-time work as the Lake Manager and deserved a full-time salary.

In 2015, Chris' service to the LBA was recognized by the Virginia House of Delegates, which adopted a joint resolution, concurred in by the Virginia Senate, commending Chris for her "exceptional service" as both Assistant Lake Manager and then Lake Manager for the Lake Barcroft Association. The resolution noted that Chris' "leadership is evident in the many strong relationships she develops with residents and her tireless efforts to strengthen" the LBA. It also noted that during her tenure as Lake Manager, Chris "has been the heart of the community, upholding the special spirit of the Lake through her compassion, dedication, and hard work."

In 2021, Chris decided to retire and to move to Texas to be near her son Ryan and her grandchildren. Losing Chris was the end of an era for LBA and the Lake residents who relied on Chris for so much. In recognition of her long service, the LBA and LBWID held a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Beach 2, first to celebrate a new driveway leading from Lakeview Drive down to the beach, as well as a new stormwater runoff system, but more significantly to honor Chris and her mother for their long-time work as Lake managers. The new Beach 2 driveway, right across from Chris' long-time home, was named "Kubat Lawson Lane" and a special street sign was placed at the top of the lane. The LBA also gave Chris a memory book

of photos from her 57 years at Lake Barcroft, childhood to retirement.

Chris retains fond memories of her life at Lake Barcroft. To her, it was a beautiful, unique Lake, so wonderful for swimming and boating. She loved the closeness of the community and found the “wonderful spirit of togetherness” to be unlike any other community. She added Lake Barcroft will “always hold a special place in my heart and memories.”

## Katie Musser



**2025—Katie Musser.**

— Katie lived right on Beachway Drive.

For that we can thank her lost dog.

In 2012, Katie was living on Morgan Street in Alexandria near Upper Holmes Run, when her dogs Grayson and Gerda went missing. Grayson came home, but Gerda was still gone. Katie went searching through the Holmes Run woods and came out at the Lake Barcroft dam — and then crossed over to Beach 1. Katie eventually found Gerda, but that hike to Beach 1 told her that she had found her new neighborhood. In 2020, Katie, her wife Aubrey, and their two children moved to Lake Barcroft. While at their home on Beachway Drive, they had twin girls as well, bringing the total to four children.

Katie grew up in Alexandria and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. She traveled

extensively after college in New Zealand and Australia and ultimately decided to go back to school for culinary arts at L'Academie de Cuisine in Gaithersburg, Maryland. She first worked for Tony Chittum at Vermillion Restaurant in Alexandria, ultimately becoming the Sous Chef, and then won a scholarship in Puyelci, France, to study French cuisine.

After a year of culinary training in France, she returned to the D.C. area to work in the Corcoran Gallery of Art's Special Events and later became Director of Events at the Neighborhood Restaurant Group. Here she gained valuable knowledge of event planning for up to 200 people, as well as staff management, and farm-to-table event staging. Her work included Outstanding in the Field, a farm-to-table event held at farms all across the USA and abroad. She also worked at several James Beard events in D.C. and on Long Island.

Finally, she decided to open her own catering business, which did well until Covid hit and forced her to close. She took some time off and gave birth to twin girls in early 2021. In late 2023, Katie and family moved to Falls Church City, though she retained ownership of the Beachway Drive home, which she now rents.

Prior to starting her new job as Lake Manager, Katie underwent several weeks of training with Chris Lawson, who gave Katie a great foundation to start the position.

During her first four-plus years on the job, Katie has overseen, or been directly involved in, a number of upgrades of LBA operating systems. Just this past year, she worked with Greg Cox on the significant revision of the LBA website, which included an upgrade of its Drupal operating system. And she ensured that all LBA governing documents, as well as the monthly Newsletters going back to 2005, are posted on the website. She has also been working with a resident historian to get all the newsletters (and reports on events) back to 1960 preserved in a digital format and uploaded into a Dropbox account.

Homeowner LBA payments can be made online more easily now that Katie has switched the payment process from PayPal to a more user-friendly program called Stripe. She also helped introduce Constant Contact, which she uses to send informational emails to all Barcroft homeowners who have signed up

for them. Katie also introduced Homewise to help generate documents for real estate agents when houses in Lake Barcroft are sold to new owners. As the LBA Lake Manager, Katie plays a key role in making sure that any outstanding dues or payments owed by prospective home sellers are paid, and that prospective buyers, as now required by Virginia law, are given homeowner association information regarding rules and procedures and a chance to opt out of the purchase.

Finally, when Covid hit in early 2020, most in-person meetings ended, including the LBA general membership meetings and the monthly Board meetings. After in-person meetings became possible again, Katie was central to finding a new, comfortable meeting location for the monthly Board meetings — the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, about a 10-minute drive from Lake Barcroft. Her ultimate goal is to streamline and modernize operations so that the residents and staff will ultimately benefit.

In a short time, Katie has made many LBA management improvements from which we all benefit. Thank you, Katie.

---

## Kevin Hardy

### Water Safety Supervisor



TOM DONLAN

2025—Kevin Hardy.

Lakeview Drive, the house where Kevin's mother still lives.

Kevin Hardy, who became Lake Barcroft's Water Safety Supervisor in 1992, comes from a family with a long history in Lake Barcroft and a deep involvement in the lifeguarding world. Kevin's paternal grandparents moved to the Lake in 1954. In 1956, his maternal grandparents (the Majors) moved into their new home on

Kevin's father, Richard, worked as a lifeguard for two seasons, in 1957 and 1958.

It was during that time that Richard met Mary Anne Major, who was running a swim school. Love bloomed. They married and had eight children, including Kevin, who was born in 1972. That year the Hardys moved to the Lakeview Drive house to help care for Kevin's grandmother. Eventually, all eight of the Hardy kids became lifeguards, seven of them working at varying times at Lake Barcroft.

Kevin began his lifeguard work at Lake Barcroft in 1987. He was so good at it that for the next four seasons (1988 through 1991), he was an Assistant Lifeguard Manager. In 1988 and 1989, he was working directly under his older brother Bob who was then Water Safety Supervisor. And, in 1992, at age 20, Kevin became Water Safety Supervisor.

Kevin graduated from college in 1995 and became a public-school teacher, which allowed him to continue his summer work here. However, in August 2004, he and his family moved to Arendtsville, Pennsylvania, where he began teaching at nearby Gettysburg Area High School. That move left him with a conundrum: Should he return to Virginia for the summers so he could retain the head lifeguard position at Lake Barcroft or stay in Pennsylvania to have more time with his family?

The LBA Board didn't want to lose Kevin so, as a compromise, they urged him to at least become a paid consultant. Kevin ultimately agreed and took that position for the Summer 2005 season when his sister Anne Marie was the WSS. For the Summer 2006 season, he again started as a paid consultant, but when the person hired as Water Safety Supervisor that year could not complete the job, Kevin agreed to fill in. To our great benefit, for every season since then Kevin has stayed on as Lake Barcroft's Water Safety Supervisor.

Kevin and his wife Jodi have four children, three of whom became certified lifeguards. Both his daughters, Grace and Sarah, have worked as lifeguards at Lake Barcroft. And Grace, the older of the two, who started working as a lifeguard here in 2016, was promoted to Deputy Water Safety Supervisor

in 2024. Grace is now the senior administrative manager for Kevin and a critical part of the lifeguard team.

During his tenure as Water Safety Supervisor, Kevin has improved standards considerably and brought many upgrades to swimming operations. Lifeguards are now trained according to the standards of both the United States Lifesaving Association (USLA) and the American Red Cross. In 2018, the USLA certified our lifeguard team, formerly known as the Barcroft Beach Lifeguards, as a Certified Seasonal Open Water Lifeguard Agency. That same season, Kevin began a junior lifeguard camp, also approved by USLA, for training new lifeguards. Over the years, Kevin has worked closely with various fire departments and ambulance services, both in Virginia and Pennsylvania, as a certified firefighter and an emergency medical technician. He brings lessons learned and access to these local services as part of his swim safety work at Lake Barcroft. Finally, when Covid-19 hit in 2020, Kevin developed a Safety and Operation Plan to keep the beaches open and the lifeguards and Lake swimmers safe.

Often with the assistance of his daughter Grace, Kevin brought many digital upgrades to Lake residents. In 2018, he opened both a Twitter account (<https://x.com/BarcroftBeach>) and a Facebook account (@BarcroftBeachLifeguards) to give beach conditions, safety messages, and lifeguard activities. In 2022, he added an Instagram account (@BarcroftBeach-Lifeguards). And, in 2024, using the WatchTower program, he implemented a new digital reporting and data collection system to improve lifeguard data management. A part of this program, called SafeBeachDay, provides information regarding the status of beaches as open or closed, as well as current Lake water temperatures and wind speed. This site can be accessed by Lake residents through a link on LBA's website.

The Summer of 2025 was Kevin's 38th season on the Lake Barcroft lifeguard team, with 28 of those years as our Water Safety Supervisor. He has made many improvements to our lifeguard and swimming programs. And he has done much to ensure the safety of our residents as they swim at the beaches and in the open waters of the Lake. We are so lucky to have him.

## Davis Grant

### LBWID Executive Director



GEORGE MCLELLAN

2025—Davis Grant.

Davis Grant has had a long, and very successful career with the Lake Barcroft Watershed Improvement District (LBWID). He was hired in March 1999 as a LBWID Technician, a field staff-level employee, and largely supported LBWID operations, such as dam operations and maintenance, watershed projects, wildlife management, and Lake maintenance tasks and projects.

In 2004, he was promoted to Operations Director. He continued to perform a significant amount of outdoor work but also took over supervision of all LBWID staff and managed day-to-day operations. He also worked closely with the LBWID Trustees, assisting with human resource policies, budget development, and capital improvement project planning.

In 2015, Davis was promoted to General Manager. (This position was renamed Executive Director in 2023.). As the head of staff, he is focused more on planning and development activities, although he continues to be responsible for the overall management of day-to-day operations — such as dam operations and maintenance, dredging and storm debris removal, and equipment and fleet maintenance. He works closely with the Trustees on developing human resource policies, hiring new staff, analyzing and developing annual budgets, and planning and supervising capital improvement projects.

Many of the dam and equipment upgrades put into place after the 1972 Hurricane Agnes incident had aged considerably by the time Davis was promoted into the management. So, starting in 2004, Davis began an ongoing program of upgrading facilities and equipment.



GEORGE MCLENNAN

**2022**—Davis Grant receives a commendation from the Virginia General Assembly for his contributions and service to the Lake community. Presenting the award is Delegate Kaye Kory.

Beginning in 2007, under Davis's direction and with the support of the Trustees, LBWID undertook modernization of the Lake Barcroft Dam's control and monitoring equipment. In 2009, he helped establish the in-house dredging program, which had previously been contracted out. From 2011-2013, he oversaw a concrete restoration project of the dam that resurfaced the dam's east and west abutments and restored the concrete piers on the primary spillway. From 2014-2015, he managed the planning and installation of the dam's catwalk and access platform, which provided much more efficient and safer access to the dam's hydraulic cylinders, bascule gate, and other equipment on the face of the dam.

From 2016-2019, he helped plan and implement the replacement and upgrade of the dam's four hydraulic cylinders that actuate the dam's bascule gate. From 2021-2023, he managed the planning and implementation of stormwater improvement projects at Beaches 2 and 4. And, most recently, he has been an integral part of LBWID's ongoing Dam Embankment

Armoring Project, designed to bring the dam into compliance with current Virginia Dam Safety Regulations and to prepare it for extreme high-water storm events.

During his tenure and, in particular, as a supervisor, Davis has been very grateful to the Trustees for the trust they put in him and for all they have taught him over the years. He is likewise grateful to the Lake community, which he has found very supportive of the LBWID and his work, with many residents volunteering to help him and the LBWID in so many ways. He strongly believes that LBWID has been able to do so much for our community during his tenure because the LBWID staff members have been so strongly committed to their jobs. Working for the LBWID requires unique and diverse skill sets, and he is extremely thankful to the entire staff team, past and present. The staff includes, among others, his wife Jennifer who came to work for LBWID as Office Manager in 2001.

Davis, thank you for your work on our behalf.



TOM DONLAJ

**2017**—Kevin Howe and Betsy Washington with the plaque given by the LBA for their work building the Garden at Beach 5 and their “environmental and community leadership in Lake Barcroft.

## 9. Lake Barcroft's Exceptional Volunteers

The Lake Barcroft life that we all enjoy and cherish is, to a very significant extent, made possible by the hundreds of volunteers who, collectively, spend thousands of hours dedicated to our community. They serve as LBWID trustees. They serve as LBA officers and board members. They work on the LBA's website, Listserv, and Newsletter.

Volunteers also devote time to the many community organizations' websites and messaging services. They create, manage, and devote time to many charitable organizations in the Lake. They represent the community in dealing with Fairfax County. They organize, run, and clean up after social and sporting events such as the Easter Egg Hunts, Fourth of July parades,

Labor Day Games, and Sand Day events, and a myriad of other activities that help build our community.

They help maintain our beaches, the Woman's Club Garden, and the Beach Five peninsula. They fix things that are broken. They enhance community property by planting flowers, trees, and bushes, and by removing objectionable weeds and invasives. They run Geese Peace and the Tree Program. They work with owners on renovations and additions and fences and docks and seawalls to maximize comity with affected neighbors.

And our volunteers don't only work in the Lake community. For years we have been school PTA leaders in all five local

public schools, active with ACCA (founded by a Lake resident years ago), supporters of the Culmore Clinic, and other local charities. Many Lake leaders have accepted appointments to various County panels, committees, and commissions to serve the citizens of Mason District and Fairfax County.

Over the years, the LBA has honored certain outstanding volunteers by giving them Exceptional Service Awards, using the following criteria:

- (i)** The individual has made an extraordinary effort over a substantial period of time.
- (ii)** The effort has resulted in a lasting improvement to the community.
- (III)** The accomplishment has provided a direct benefit or service to the Lake Barcroft community.
- (iv)** The individual serves as a positive force in the community and as a role model for others.

The following outstanding volunteers were honored during the last 25 years:

- 2007** Carol and Tom Donlan for their work in producing the Newsletter  
Amon Nixson for his work as fireworks coordinator
- 2012** Holly Hazard for her work in creating and running Geese Peace
- 2015** Dorothy Werner for her significant early work on the plantings design of the Woman's Club Garden  
Joan Doupe for her work in organizing community social events
- 2016:** Charles de Seve for his work as LBWID Trustee
- 2017** Betsy Washington and Kevin Howe for their environmental and community leadership
- 2018** Jeanne Meyer for her work in organizing community social events  
Bob Gonzalez for his creation and maintenance of the LB Contractors List



LARRY GOLFER

**2015**—Chris Lawson is presented with a commendation for her outstanding work from the Virginia General Assembly. Presenting is then Delegate (and Lake Barcroft Resident) Kaye Kory with then LBA President Jim Kilbourne.

- 2021** George Waters, for his decades of volunteer services of all types  
Nomi Taslitt for her service welcoming new families  
Elaine Lindstrom for her service running the Tree Replacement Program  
Debra Lee for all her communications work for the Lake Barcroft Woman's Club

## **LBA Presidents from 2000 to the present:**

- David Feld (1999 - 2002)  
George McLennan (2002 - 2004)  
David Goslin (2004 - 2006)  
Stuart Feldstein (2006 - 2008)  
Cindy Waters (2008 - 2010)  
Warren Russell (2010 - 2012)  
Sally Determan (2012 - 2014)  
Jim Kilbourne (2014 - 2016)  
Bill Lecos (2016 - 2018)  
Ann Cullather (2018 - 2019)  
Janet Kerley (2019 - 2021)  
Michael Montfort (2021 - 2023)  
Larry Hoffer (2023 -2025)  
Bill Baumgartner (2025-2026)

**2024** Jerry Mendenhall and George McLennan for their service as LBWID Trustees

Leigh Gonazlez for her work organizing and maintaining the Lake Barcroft Woman's Club medical closet

In the past, unusually effective long-term volunteers and employees have made such major impacts on the community that various physical spaces have been named after them (many before 2000, but they deserve mention as well).

**The Stuart Finley Bridge** honors one of the most outstanding volunteers in Lake history. Stuart was central in bringing to the community the nearly limitless advantages of the LBWID.

Stuart was a strong environmentalist and a member of the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District, and thus aware of the relevant statute pursuant to which a watershed improvement district could be created. So, in 1972, when Hurricane Agnes caused the western dam area to erode and empty the Lake, Stuart recognized that a governmental agency with taxing authority could provide the funds and management for the rebuilding of the dam. Out of this

## LBWID Trustees from 2000 to the present:

David Alne (1978 - 2003)

Tony Bracken (2000-2008)

Peter Silvia (2001 - 2010)

Charles deSeve (2003 - 2016)

George McLennan (2008 - 2023)

Jerry Mendenhall (2010- 2022)

Alan Pisarski (2016 - present)

Brenda Pierce (2022 - present)

Jim Simonson (2023 - present)

wisdom — and with hundreds of volunteer hours, including Stuart's — our LBWID was created, and our Lake was saved. And this critical contribution was only one of the many community improvements attributable to Stuart's long volunteer history.

**Swift Island** is named after Lloyd Swift, a long-time resident who played a major role in managing and restocking the fish, which have been such an important part of the Lake environment and have provided the joy of fishing to so many residents.

**Rauth Lane**, through the Woman's Club Garden, honors Ernie Rauth who for decades chaired the Beautification and Improvements Committee (now the Maintenance and Improvements Committee) and worked almost from the start of the Lake community in designing the landscape for the beaches and the other community-owned properties, including the Woman's Club Garden. He also supervised the contracted landscapers and chaired the Architectural Review Committee for many years.

**Kubat/Lawson Lane** (the access to Beach 2) recognizes the extraordinary work of MaryKatherine Kubat and her daughter Chris Lawson. MaryKatherine served for 17 years and Chris for 32 years as the manager of the LBA and its predecessor organizations.

The **Betsy Washington Garden** at Beach 5 honors Betsy Washington, the originator and designer of the native plants' gardens at both Beach 3 and Beach 5. Betsy also made many other environmentally sensitive contributions to the beauty of



LARRY GOLFER

**2022**—George Waters (right) was honored for decades of service to our Community at a Lake-wide “retirement” party led by then-LBA President Mike Montfort, who made the presentation. The access lane to the Beach 1 boat ramp is now George Waters Way.

the community properties and provided gardening advice to homeowners. For years she led the tree replacement program.

**George Waters Way**, the access lane to the Beach 1 boat ramp, honors a mega-volunteer whose contributions to the Lake community are almost too great to list. He served two separate 6-year terms on the LBA governing board, including a term as president, where he and others negotiated the compromise settlement of the Parcel A dispute, which led to the construction of new homes on Tennis Court and Recreation Lane in Section 2 and the preservation of the land around it. He also served for a critical 11 years as chair of the Maintenance Committee, during which he originated and supervised many Lake improvements and created a committee of volunteer carpenters. Porta-johns were added to the beaches. Our first Earth Day was celebrated. The bridge to the Woman's Club Garden was substantially rebuilt. Many boat racks were improved and many additional racks built. Grills were added to our beaches. He aided in the creation of the

Beach 3 playground and the play equipment improvements at other beaches. He also chaired an ad hoc Traffic Committee, which led to the installation of multiple stop signs, improving pedestrian safety.

In addition to Lake awards, during the last 25 years several Lake residents have been named by Fairfax County as Lord or Lady Fairfax for their contributions to County life — David Feld, Cindy Waters, Betsy Washington, Charles deSeve, Bill Lecos, and Eddy and Penny Azcarate.

In 2014, Anthony Bracken received a distinguished service award from the Fairfax County Historical Society for his 2001 book on the history of Lake Barcroft from 1950–2000, which is included in the second part of this book.

Without the work of these leaders — and without the efforts of many additional volunteers — life in Lake Barcroft would be significantly less joyous. We thank them all.

# 10. Donors

Publication of this two-volume history book was made possible by major contributions from the Lake Barcroft Association, the Lake Barcroft Watershed Improvement District, and by generous contributions from the following residents:

Mary and Alfred Aunon	Jody and Jake McKitrick
Christina Biebesheimer and Bill Baumgartner	Susan and Jeff Michels
Walter Cate	Wang-Ching and Michael Montfort
Stephanie Adams and Mark Cavich	Katie Musser and Aubrey Mosley
Holly Hazard and Rick Clayton	Ann Gamber and Gabe Nassar
David Corro and John Pucher	Michael Niebling
Ann and Greg Cox	Elaine and Dan Oran
Becky and Michael Cranna	Pat Payne
Anne Cullather	Trippi and Tom Penland
Pam Edwards and Gerry Czeiner	Eli and Alan Pisarski
Diane and Seth Davidson	Aileen and Joe Pisciotta
Sara and Ed Davis	Brenda Poole and Chris DiPetto
Carol and Tom Donlan	Cynthia Wolloch and Joe Reid
Joyce and Andy Doyle	Robin Rinearson
Lisa DuBois and Phil Headley	Sam Rothman
Ketty and Steve Farrell	Martha Rubenstein and Mark Goldenberg
Bob Finley	Jennifer and Michael Shumaker
Kellie and David Goldstein	Maureen and Jim Simonson
Carole Bausell and Larry Golfer	Diane and Ralph Smalley
Laura Degitz and David Goslin	Carrol McCarren and Mike Sternad
Tacie Yoon and Kevin Kampschroer	Ken Trotter
Eva Kosztarab and Ken Kastner	Victor Utgoff (In Memoriam)
Elaine and Jon Kent	Meredith and Reid Voss
Marcia Grabowski and Rick Kercz	Cindy and George Waters
Janet Kerley	Kathy and Ken Watson
Diane and Jim Kilbourne	Diane Weeks
Lark Lovering	Barry White
Wanda and Ron Martinson	Anonymous
Sarah and Matt Mattingly	



# 11. Authors and Acknowledgements

## The Authors

### Sara-Ann "Sally" Determan



Sally is a Lake old-timer. She moved with her then husband Dean to her first Lake home on Pinetree Terrace in 1969 and to her second (and present) Pinetree Terrace home in 1973. Sally raised three sons – Dann, David and Stevie – here. All three attended the local public schools. Son

Stevie died of leukemia in 1984. Thanks to her surviving sons and their lovely wives, Sally has four adult grandkids and one great-granddaughter. Son Dann and his family moved into their own Pinetree Terrace home in 2004.

Sally was born and raised in a small Pennsylvania town and moved to Washington in 1963. She graduated from George Washington University School of Law in 1967; clerked for a judge on the DC U.S. Court of Appeals 1967-68; and then joined the law firm of Hogan & Hartson (now Hogan Lovells) where she became the first woman partner. She retired in 2005.

Sally's entry into the world of Lake volunteer activities arose when the LBWID was being formed and community leaders were selecting three candidates for its first Board of Trustees. A local feminist real estate maven was offended at the all-male preliminary candidate list and insisted that a woman should be named. She recommended Sally, who then served as LBWID Board Chair through the extraordinary first three years of its existence (1973-1976), focusing on the legal issues involved in securing the bond financing, the many contracts that were essential in rebuilding the dam, and general LBWID administration.

Sally also served on the LBA Board from 2008-2014 and as President from 2012-2014. She chaired the Beach Committee. She is a member of the Woman's Club and a social member of the Village. She has also been a staff volunteer for the Newsletter.

### Jim Kilbourne



Jim is also a Lake Barcroft old-timer and activist. He moved with his wife, Diane, to their home on Whispering Lane in 1985. Both of their now-adult children – Jae and Sarah – grew up here and went to the local public schools. They were each active in local sporting organizations and served as Lake lifeguards and lifeguard managers under Kevin Hardy.

Jim and Diane, native Montanans, met at the University of Montana School of Law and came to the Washington, D.C. area in 1979. That same year, they both went to work for the U.S. Justice Department, from which Jim retired in 2022, after heading the Appellate Section of the Environment and Natural Resource Division for 27 years and earning a fine reputation for his civil/ criminal litigation and appellate skills.

Jim has been a long-time community activist, serving on the BARLAMA board in 1991 (prior to its merger with LA-BARCA to form the LBA) and thereafter, on the LBA Board from 1992 to 1998. He was LBA Board President from 1994-1996 and chaired the Environmental Quality Committee and the Legal Committee. Jim served a second six-year LBA Board term from 2010-2016, and again as President from 2014-2016. During this second term he was Treasurer and chair of the Architectural Review Committee

## Acknowledgements

This History reflects the critical work of our editor, Carol Donlan, and the many Lake residents whose contributions are noted in the text. Big, big thanks to all. And when you run into these generous neighbors, please add your thanks. Many, especially Carol, spent untold hours on their additions to our work.

Also included are the work of our main photographers Tom Donlan, Larry Golfer, Greg Knadle, and George McLennan. Tom also took on the job as photo editor, going through thousands of pictures, editing hundreds, and adding new shots to make this edition come alive.

A special thanks to George Waters, who was the driving force behind this History. He is a big fan of the Tony Bracken history and understood the community's need for a book to cover the period 2000 - 2025. And he is irresistibly persuasive, as we learned after having been pressed into service by this master manipulator. A casual comment at a Lake social event – "Hey, Jim and Sally, you're the perfect twosome to update the Lake Barcroft history!" – and here we are, hundreds of hours later, weary authors who hope you have enjoyed this History. When you see George, first, thank him and second, RUN before you've agreed to a big Lake job!



# *The first 50 years*

## Foreword

In the year 2000, as the Lake Barcroft Community was planning to celebrate its 50th anniversary, retired Navy Captain and long-time LB resident Tony Bracken, with help from his son Len, wrote a series of monthly articles in the LB Newsletter about our community, chronicling its remarkable history. He was assisted by Stuart Finley, LBWID's decades-long Manager, who provided many of the photos, and by the memories and papers of a number of residents, few of whom are still with us. The articles were further edited and turned into the Lake Barcroft History Book. The book had a profound impact on me as it made me realize that this very special place didn't just fall from the sky, rather it was the work of hundreds of volunteers doing remarkable work from purchasing Barcroft Beach Incorporated from the estates of Col. Barger and Charles Dockser (which owned the Lake and beaches) and which was accomplished via a door-to-door campaign raising \$300 per lot; to creating LABARCA and BARLAMA (later merged with BBI as the LBA); to the vote to tax ourselves allowing for the creation of the LBWID and providing the means to repair the dam that had washed out the Lake during Hurricane Agnes; to the creation of the Newcomer's Club and the Woman's Club, etc. The stories and undertakings are endless and inspirational. The actions of those who created our neighborhood in those first 50 years must be remembered, so I am delighted the LBA Board agreed to republish Tony's book. I hope it will inspire you and lead you to help maintain this community over the next 50 years.

Of course, the Bracken book only chronicled the first 50 years. If we were going to republish it, we needed someone to write about the last 25 years (2000–2025). I approached long-time residents Sally Determan (former LBWID Chairman and former LBA President) and Jim Kilbourne (former LBA President) and they agreed to write about the last 25 years. That is the first part of this two-volume tome. We should all be appreciative of their work.

So please, read this book!

**George Waters**  
*Former President LBA*  
Lakeview Drive

Right: Original cover of the first edition of the Lake Barcroft History publication.



Lake Barcroft

History



# Contents

<b>Preface</b>	1
<b>Introduction</b>	2
<b>Chronology of Major Events</b>	5
<b>Chapter One: One Man's Dream</b>	
Colonel Barger's Quest	6
Walter Gropius	6
Starting Out	7
<b>Chapter Two: From Vision To Reality</b>	
The Founders	8
Developing the Property	8
The Salesman	8
Real Estate	10
Managing the Project	10
<b>Chapter Three: A Community Is Born</b>	
LABARCA	11
Community Action	12
Organization	12
Early Social Activities	12
Barger and LABARCA	12
<b>Chapter Four: The Cadillac Community</b>	
A Community at Odds	14
Pollution Problems	14
Dredging	15
<b>Chapter Five: Stuart Finley Takes the Helm</b>	
The Community Grows	17
Finley Elected President	17
First Steps	17
Reviving the Lake	18
<b>Chapter Six: "What Do I Get for My \$10?"</b>	
Activities	21
Water Sports	22
Socializing	22
Clubs	23
The International Committee	23
Bowling Leagues	24
<b>Chapter Seven: Signs of the Times</b>	
Small Sanitary District	25
Beautification	25
Street Signs	26
Street Names	27
<b>Chapter Eight: "This Lake Is Your Lake"</b>	
Buying the Lake	28
BARLAMA	29
Building the Recreation Center	30
<b>Chapter Nine: Hurricane Agnes</b>	
Damage Assessment	34
Public Reaction	34
Search for Funding	35
Watershed Improvement District	36
The WID Vote	37
<b>Chapter Ten: A New Beginning</b>	
The WID	39
The Bond Issue	39
Restoring the Lake	40
A New Dam	42
<b>Chapter Eleven: The Second Generation</b>	
Social Activities	43
Community Organizations	44
Nature and the Environment	45
<b>Chapter Twelve: The Lake Barcroft Woman's Club</b>	
The Beginning	49
Typical Projects	49
Activities	50
Fund-Raising Events	52
The Footbridge	53
The Community Garden	54
The Legacy	54
<b>Conclusion</b>	55
<b>Appendices</b>	
Photo Identification	84
Community Leaders	86
Into the 21st Century	92

## Author Credits

**Anthony Bracken** wrote a series of articles for the *Lake Barcroft Newsletter* commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Lake Barcroft Community. He has been a Barcroft homeowner since 1981. Tony graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy (BS, Engineering) and has a Masters Degree from George Washington University. He was a career naval officer, aviator, air group commander and naval attaché to Moscow, USSR. In a second career, he was vice president for marketing with a firm specializing in defense and oceanographic products.

**Stuart Finley**, who has been a Barcroft resident since 1954, illustrated this book, primarily by selecting photographs shot by non-Barcroft resident Ted Jones who was a long-time associate of Stu at NBC-Washington and later photographer and editor of an environmental documentary film production company. Ted is recognized as *having an eye*... which means that he recognizes a potential picture when he sees one, and being a *grab artist*... which means that if someone falls Ted has his picture before he hits the ground.

© by L. Anthony Bracken (text)  
and Robert Finley (photos)

Printed in the United States of America 2001.

ISBN: 0-615-11978-6

# Preface

The year 2000 marked the 50th anniversary of Lake Barcroft as a community. In 1999, my wife, Martha, suggested that someone should write a history of the community. When asked who, she said her husband could do it and volunteered me to undertake the project. Therese St. Hilaire, chairperson of the Publications Committee of the Lake Barcroft Association, brought together Jean Vos, Carol Hawley, Ernie Rauth, Stuart Finley, my wife and me to explore the possibilities. The meeting resulted in my commitment to write 12 monthly articles for the *Lake Barcroft Newsletter* during the anniversary year.

A few phone calls to local historical societies led to the Fairfax City Regional Library, formerly known as the Fairfax Central Library. The Virginia Room is a reference center for local historical data and the meeting place for the Fairfax Historical Commission. The room contains a treasure of reference materials including bound copies of the *Lake Barcroft Newsletter* starting in 1960. The *Fairfax Herald* has been indexed and copied to microfilm for the library. This weekly newspaper provides items of historical interest concerning Lake Barcroft until it ceased publishing in 1973. The librarians in the Virginia Room are most helpful and keep a file containing articles on Lake Barcroft.

Jean Vos provided records from the early 50s, which were especially important in researching the beginnings of community action. Her late husband, Dr. Chris Murphy, took an active role in the community and saved documents from those times. Stuart Finley has maintained a wide range of records covering the late 50s to the present. He always produced a file or article pertinent to the subject at hand. I interviewed and called Ernie Rauth on several occasions to tap his extraordinary memory. He has great stories of the past.

Other valuable sources included: George Bates, Ralph Spenser, Matt Cazan, Hildegarde Allebaugh, Mary Duff Glowa, Kirk Burns, Bill Lowenthal and Helen O'Rourke-McClary. Chica Brunsvold recounted the saga of the footbridge and provided a comprehensive scrapbook about its construction. Norma Cockrell, Woman's Club historian, lent me several scrapbooks



August 15, 1965

going back to the mid-50s. Kay Ward-Johnson sent papers describing the landscaping of the island in 1974. Marjorie Macone described the Book Club and gave me the best line in all the articles. Many others helped to piece together information, especially Stuart Finley who also checked the articles for accuracy.

I would like to acknowledge my family. My wife was never too busy to read and comment on my writing. Our son, Len, spent many hours with me going over text and debating syntax. I am very grateful for his assistance.

Finally, Stuart Finley came up with a plan to make the articles into a book. He put together a group of people and organizations to fund the publication expenses. The "angels" included the Lake Barcroft Woman's Club, Lake Barcroft Association, David Alne, Stuart Finley, Jane and Dick Legault and Therese St. Hilaire. Thank you all.

# Introduction

**A**s a prelude to the 50-year history of the Lake Barcroft community, a portion of the Lake Barcroft Story is reprinted from the *Lake Barcroft Directory*. This is a synopsis of local area history up to 1950. It also contains some background on the person for whom Lake Barcroft is named.

## The Lake Barcroft Story

BARCROFT COMMUNITY was named in memory of a doctor who built his home here and also operated a mill. The man was Dr. John W. Barcroft, originally from New Jersey. In 1849, Dr. Barcroft came to our area and built both a home and a mill on Columbia Pike at Holmes Run near the present dam. He practiced medicine throughout the surrounding community and ran his mill up to the time of the Civil War.

During its retreat from the Battle of Bull Run, the Union Army overran Dr. Barcroft's home. His property was so damaged that he went back North until the end of the war. He then returned to Fairfax County and built a new home on what became known as Barcroft Hill.

Before the time of Dr. Barcroft, our neighborhood was not without some notable history. The original residents were the Doe and Necostin Indians of the Algonquin tribes. (Anacostia derives its name from the Necostins.) Artifacts of these early natives are still occasionally found. Howard Uphoff has uncovered arrowheads on his land at 6308 Lakeview Drive.

Munson Hill Farm was a large tract between what is now Bailey's Crossroads and Seven Corners. It was settled and developed during the early 1700's. Timothy Munson bought the land in 1851 and gave his name to the farm. In the time to come, his name was also applied to a community and a street just north of our lake area. Columbia Pike was constructed as a toll road in 1808, and was then called the Washington Graveled Road.

During the Civil War, both Munson Hill Farm and Bailey's Crossroads were scenes of action. At the beginning of the war Bailey's Crossroads was a Union Army camp. At the same time, the Confederate Army occupied locations at Annandale and Fairfax. Later, federal troops built Fort Buffalo at the present site of Seven Corners, and it became one of the ring of forts protecting the District of Columbia in 1861. At about that time, Bailey's Crossroads was the site of the largest military review ever held anywhere. General McClellan reviewed 75,000 troops, and President Lincoln was among the additional 75,000 spectators who came to watch the Army of the Potomac's vast parade.

It was during this grand review that Julia Ward Howe was inspired to write new words for the music of a song called John Brown's Body. The new song became one of the most stirring anthems of all time, the Battle Hymn of the Republic.

Bailey's Crossroads is named for the Baileys, a circus owning family whose menagerie and shows were merged with those of P. T. Barnum about 1870. The Barnum and Bailey Circus was then billed as, "The Greatest Show on Earth." For many years, Bailey's Crossroads was its winter quarters.

Lake Barcroft came into being in 1915. An increasing need for water by the City of Alexandria led the Alexandria Water Company to build the dam and establish a reservoir to store the waters from the branches of Holmes Run. The North Branch of Holmes Run is now called Tripps Run.

Dam construction was begun in 1913 under contract with the Piedmont Construction Company. Specifications for the Barcroft Dam were severe and the construction was massive. The structure is of cyclopean masonry and concrete. The foundation is laid upon bedrock. A railway was built to transport the masonry stones to the dam site. The contractor went broke completing the job.

The result was a dam 400 feet wide with the spillway at the top 205 feet above mean sea level and 63 feet above the streambed. Behind this dam, there formed a lake of 115 acres and over five miles of shoreline. When full it held nearly 620,000,000 gallons and had an average daily runoff of about 10,000,000 gallons. In 1942, gates were installed at the top of the dam to raise the spillway level five feet. This increased the size of the reservoir to 135 acres and the capacity to about 800,000,000 gallons.

In the late 1940's, the reservoir became too small to serve Alexandria and other water sources replaced its use. In 1950 the reservoir and its surrounding land were put up for sale by the Water Company. There was a movement to turn it into a Fairfax County park, but the Board of Supervisors considered the economics and decided in favor of private development. A partnership of developers from Boston bought the lake and 680 acres of land in the spring of 1950 for about one million dollars.

*Adapted from "Lake Barcroft Origins" by Will Fazar, Lake Barcroft Directory 1967, and "Some Virginia History" by Rex Lauck, Lake Barcroft Directory 1970. Revised, 1974 & 1979, by Myron Birnbaum. Revised, 1992 by William Lowenthal.*

# The Barcroft Dam



In 1913, the Piedmont Construction Company began building the Barcroft Dam by laying railroad tracks in the Holmes Run valley to transport rock for the dam and building a makeshift coffer dam to control stream flow. (September 13, 1913)



Lift by lift, the dam began to rise. With a gaping hole in the middle to accommodate the railroad tracks and to pass storm water, the two ends were constructed . . . slim at the far end, but fat in the middle to ensure stability. (November 2, 1914)



A rickety looking construction boom located by the railroad tracks unloaded large rocks to face the dam and partially fill its interior. The old quarry is now underwater off 3428 Mansfield Road in the North Area. (July 2, 1914)



Before completion, Piedmont Construction Company went broke. This freshet pouring through the incompletely dam illustrates its problems. Somehow, we know not how, the Alexandria Water Company managed to finish construction. (About 1915)



Engineers have quibbled whether the Barcroft Dam is a true Cyclopean Masonry structure. These rocks laid on top of concrete waiting for the next pour verify that it indeed does have a Cyclopean mix of rock and concrete. (November 30, 1913)



Completed, the Barcroft Dam supplied water to the City of Alexandria. Water company employees released water through underflow pipes. It flowed downstream and was recaptured at Duke Street in Alexandria and stored in a reservoir.



# Fifty Years of Lake Barcroft

## A Chronology of Major Events

- 1950** Colonel Joseph V. Barger and associates purchased Lake Barcroft, a reservoir, from the Alexandria Water Works for \$1 million and started development.
- 1951** The first home was built and occupied by the Oshins family on what is now Stanford Circle.
- 1952** In July, eleven of fifteen homeowners met for the purpose of starting a community association, known from that time as The Lake Barcroft Community Association (LABARCA).
- 1954** Forty homeowners vote approval for LABARCA bylaws thus making the organization official.
- 1955** The Lake Barcroft Woman's Club was founded.
- 1958** There were now 650 homes in Lake Barcroft.
- 1960** The Lake Barcroft Newsletter changed from a mimeographed sheet to a printed and bound publication supported by advertisements.
- 1961** The first major dredging operation commenced and continued for 18 months with expenditures of over \$200,000 shared by Fairfax County and Col. Barger. The excess silt was used to create an island and a peninsula at the Holmes Run end of the lake and a peninsula at Tripps Run.
- 1962** An entity known as a Small Sanitary District was established which taxed Lake Barcroft homeowners for the purpose of dredging and installing curbs and sewers.
- 1964** Many street names were changed, and a new address numbering system effected.
- 1965** Fifteen ladies who had recently moved to Lake Barcroft met and formed the Newcomer's Club.
- 1969** Colonel Barger and his partner, Charles Dockser, passed away giving Lake Barcroft residents the opportunity to purchase the lake.
- 1970** Many Barcroft residents contributed \$300 per household to buy the lake for \$300,000. A new corporation, the Barcroft Lake Management Association (BARLAMA), was established to take over the lake, dam and beaches.
- 1971** The Lake Barcroft Recreation Corporation was incorporated to build a recreation center on Parcel A, a property purchased from the Barger and Dockser estates.
- 1972** Hurricane Agnes washed out an earthen portion of the dam. The lake drained and left a depressing mud hole.
- 1973** The residents voted to establish the Lake Barcroft Watershed Improvement District (LBWID), a self-taxing entity, to raise funds for restoring the dam. Work began on the repairs, and dredging removed silt and debris from the lake bottom. Decanting basins were constructed at the ends of the lake
- 1974** The restored dam, outfitted with an automatic gate, was certified and became operational. By mid-summer the lake was filled.
- 1974** The Lake Barcroft Recreation Center opened.
- 1977** The Lake Barcroft Woman's Club dedicated the footbridge at Homes Run.
- 1992** LABARCA and BARLAMA joined and formed the Lake Barcroft Association (LBA).
- 1995** The Lake Barcroft Woman's Club dedicated the Community Garden commemorating 40 years of service to the community.
- 1999** The Lake Barcroft Foundation was established which includes the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund.
- 2000** The Community Garden waterfall was named for Ernie Rauth in honor of his work on the garden.
- 2000** Lake Barcroft entered the electronic age with the introduction of the Web Site and Listserve, called the Lake Link.

# CHAPTER ONE

# One Man's Dream

**I**magine our community if William Levitt had discovered this area and developed another Levittown—cracker box houses on postage stamp lots. Or, if Robert E. Simon had seen Lake Barcroft before he saw Lake Anne, we could be living in a place called Reston, a planned community with cluster homes, common lands and village centers all designed to look like a European satellite town. Fortunately, Colonel Joseph V. Barger envisioned something else: a unique, rustic enclave only a few miles from the White House.

## Colonel Barger's Quest

Colonel Barger's discovery of Lake Barcroft is a local legend. One long-time resident recalls the Colonel's spirited account of how he flew into National Airport and saw the sun sparkling off Lake Barcroft. He took a cab from the airport to pinpoint its exact location. That was the beginning of his quest. His timing was excellent: construction of new reservoir facilities at Occoquan, Virginia made the lake surplus to the needs of the Alexandria Water Company, which put it up for sale. Some Fairfax County officials wanted to turn the lake property into a park, but the county's Planning Division recommended zoning the property suburban residential with minimum lot sizes of 10,000 square feet. The Board of Supervisors opted for private development, arguing that the county could not afford to forego the tax revenue, which would be acquired as a result of such development. Backed by a group of investors from New England, Barger negotiated the purchase of the 135-acre lake and the surrounding 566 acres of woodlands—all for \$1 million.

Barger named his company Lake Barcroft Estates, Inc., to reflect his vision of a private gated community composed of small country estates. He started the project by subdividing the tract into 1,250 lots, ranging from one-fourth of an acre to a full acre. In a 1950 article in the *Washington Post* headlined “Bulldozers Shatter Lake Barcroft's Calm,” Barger expressed his intention to construct roads, sewers and water lines in four months, and then to start building homes. He and his associates had a reputation for integrating

their development plans with the existing natural environment. Barger also wanted Barcroft Estates to have its own police force, several private beaches and, of course, the lake for swimming, boating and fishing. He envisioned 800 homes—some placed on two lots. The individual homes were to be custom-built to the wishes of the lot buyers although plans and specifications were subject to architectural review to protect against sub-standard houses and the use of a repetitive, single design. For all intents and purposes, all homes would be custom-built.

## Walter Gropius

A resourceful entrepreneur, Barger used every means possible to promote his projects. In this case, he called on an acquaintance, internationally renowned architect Walter Gropius, dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Architecture and Design. As a young architect in Germany in the early 1900s, Gropius had been greatly influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright. He went on to develop the Bauhaus style, which took advantage of developing technologies and the advent of mass production to design everything from glass buildings to sterile



The Gropius-designed house at 6325 Lakeview Drive

but efficient housing for the masses. The extent of Gropius' contribution to the architecture of Lake Barcroft Estates is not clear, but his influence on the design of American homes is set forth in Tom Wolfe's book, *From Bauhaus to Our House*. Wolfe castigates the Bauhaus style as being "bare, spare, impersonal and highly abstract architecture" not reflecting the energy and exuberance of the American century.

The article in the *Washington Post* on Lake Barcroft reported that Gropius planned to construct a large nursery for children and to plant azaleas throughout the area to make "the rolling hills a riot of color." He suggested that homes have built-in barbecue pits on the porch to emulate country living. His plan reportedly included designing four moderately priced, three-bedroom, two-bathroom ramblers in four different price ranges. Each house would feature separate areas for sleep, work and play. It would seem that Gropius was prescient in recognizing the need for communal nurseries and, at the same time, aware of the changing culture in the fifties, when a barbecue in the back yard was the rage. However, only one Gropius house—located at 6325 Lakeview Drive—was ever designed and built. It is not clear if the design was actually put to blueprints or if it was merely the result of sketches on a napkin. In any case, the house was expensive at the time and difficult to sell.

## Starting Out

Such were the dreams of the developers and designers of Lake Barcroft Estates as they cleared the land. The beginning was shaky at best. Bailey's Crossroads featured little more than Blackwelders Barbecue and the old Payne Grocery Store. Seven Corners was a primitive one-grade roadway tangle with a perpetual traffic jam. And, there was no Seven Corners Shopping Center. The beltway did not exist; the Tyson's Corner area had only a general store; Route 7 was a winding, two-lane road; and what is now Skyline Plaza was a busy general-aviation airport. Having been a reservoir, Lake Barcroft was preserved in a park-like setting that had no roads to speak of and certainly no easy access. The whole scene took on the appearance of a logging camp: roads carved out of the woods were paved with gravel or a combination of oil and wood chips. The roads were used both to haul trees and to reach the properties Barger hoped to sell. Perhaps Barger saw these roads as a way to preserve the rustic flavor of the project, but at first, it was a real mess. The access problems slowed sales, and some of the more grandiose ideas fell by the wayside.



A grim Colonel Barger listening to Stuart Finley

The first settlers—and it must have seemed like the New West (of Washington, D.C., at least)—broke trails to their home sites. Sales representatives used jeeps to show prospective buyers lots, navigating nonexistent paths through the forest, in what must have been a difficult sell. The very first of the pioneers lived in a tent while their house was being built. The first family to move into their permanent residence also laid claim to being the first residents of Lake Barcroft. For the new homesteaders it was a very rustic and challenging life in a wooded paradise so near to and yet so far from the nation's capital.

As the number of residents grew, leaders, followers and dissidents emerged. Activists and organizations would come together to set the community's course for the next fifty years. Barger worked with these people and—despite all the growing pains and despite being a shrewd businessman not given to ethereal thoughts—the Colonel said that being in Lake Barcroft was "like being in heaven. It's just a glorious spot."

## CHAPTER TWO

# From Vision To Reality

**T**he development of Lake Barcroft Estates began not too long after the Second World War, when lives, careers and educations had been seriously disrupted for four long years. Americans were struggling to regain their footing and to start over. Colonel Joseph Barger was commencing a major land development at a time when money was in short supply. Washington, D.C., lacked an industrial base; citizens of major U.S. cities considered the nation's capital to be a provincial, sleepy southern town. Homebuyers were naturally cautious.

### The Founders

Barger, vice president and later president and director of Lake Barcroft Estates, Inc., was in charge of project operations. It was his job to turn his dream into reality. He laid out plans and painted a rosy picture of sailboats on pristine waters with bright beaches for swimming. In fact, the area was a nature reserve that was growing wild. Clearing the forest and creating the infrastructure to support a thousand home sites was to be a tremendous undertaking and a huge gamble. But most of all, it would take all of Barger's experience and sales skills to sell the concept to prospective buyers as well as to his financial backers.

The first president of Lake Barcroft Estates, Inc., was the assistant attorney general of Massachusetts, David Miller. The chairman of the board, Charles E. Dockser, periodically visited the site to check on how the money was being spent. Together, Dockser and Barger had developed over thirty-five other communities in the past, many featuring waterfront properties. Barger also had the benefit of counsel in Andrew W. Clark, a local Alexandria lawyer noted for pushing permits and variances through the county system.

### Developing the Property

Barger's purchase of Lake Barcroft included a farm just off Columbia Pike, where Aqua Terrace now stands. He set up his office there and contracted a prestigious surveying company, DeLashmunt and Associates, to lay out the streets and house lots. Barger's management style avoided hands-on participation in the actual construction process, so he hired local firms to install roads, sewers and a water system. The first roads were cleared in what is now Section One and extended from Beach 1 around the loop comprising Lakeview Drive, Stanford Circle and Tollgate Terrace. As lots sold, Lakeview Drive progressed to the west from Beach 1 along the water. The trees, hilly

terrain and hard clay soil were formidable obstacles; huge shale formations required considerable blasting. It was tough going and required massive capital investment up front.

Lake Barcroft was divided into three geographic areas, which exist to the present: (1) the South Area, extending from the dam to the footbridge at Holmes Run; (2) the North Area from the dam to Tripps Run; and (3) the Middle Area from Tripps Run to Holmes Run. Roads, sewers and water pipes were completed in the South Area first. As lots were selling and house construction was starting in the South Area, roads were cleared leading into the Middle Area from Sleepy Hollow Road along Dearborn Drive. The final phase of development was the North Area, from Columbia Pike along Blair Road. The area where Tripps Run emptied into Lake Barcroft was a marsh, so there was no direct passage between the Middle and North areas. It would be years before a causeway was constructed to connect the two.

The lots in the first sections were small, which led to zoning problems. The surveyor, Basil Delashmunt, argued with Barger, trying to convince him to enlarge the lots. Eventually Barger agreed, but it was too late for Sections One, Two and Three. To make matters worse, a sewer line parallel to Lakeview Drive—near the water—created an easement that pushed home construction either toward the street or close to the shoreline. In several cases, the houses had to be placed closer than the county building code permitted because of this restriction. The county recognized the problem and rubber-stamped requests for variances.

### The Salesman

Even with helpful county concessions on zoning and construction code requirements, Barger had difficulty making his payrolls. Dockser bailed him out with infusions of cash, but it was a race to make the project self-sustaining. Building proceeded apace, and construction traffic was heavy. In the South Area, Lakeview Drive was the only road that provided access to most of the home sites; Whispering Lane did not exist at the time. The early settlers wanted to slow down development and enjoy the relative isolation and tranquility of a quiet life in the woods. Barger, however, needed cash and pushed hard for sales.

In 1974, an early resident, Rex Chaney, reflected on the first twenty-four years of life in Lake Barcroft. His thoughts were



**Lake Barcroft Estates in the early 50's. There were only a few homes in the South Area and none in the Middle and North Areas. Notice the deltas of silt at the two stream inlets.**

published in the *Lake Barcroft Directory*, a portion of which is quoted below.

*Looking back on the early days when a not-very-hardy handful of us bought lots and built houses, we can remember the maps that showed nice paved roads where there were no roads; sketches of white sandy beaches where there were no beaches; gas mains on the charts where there was no gas—and no energy shortage to blame it on either.*

*Much of what we saw was in the fertile mind of that super salesman, Colonel Joseph V. Barger. All you had to do with that guy was show up at his office and you were as good as sold, money or no money. He made it clear he was only there to do favors for nice people who stopped by and showed an interest in Lake Barcroft. When the sales pitch ended and we had been relieved of a \$200 down payment on a \$10,000 or \$12,000 lot, we may have been a little shaken—but we were sure our dreams of owning a house on a lake had really come true.*

*To his credit, salesman that he was, Colonel Barger did deliver on some—maybe even most—of his promises. We got roads . . . and beaches . . . and gas. Furthermore, there was that beautiful lake, just like the man said, albeit with stumps on the shoreline and lily pads in the shallow areas.*

Despite the rustic setting and Barger's promises, the early buyers were betting on the future and ignoring the present. It is to their credit that so many stayed the course.

## Real Estate

Lake Barcroft Estates was one of the first major real estate developments in Fairfax County. Local realtors were reluctant to bring clients to such an undeveloped wilderness; developers had little experience in turning a reservoir into Barger's original concept—a community of small country estates. Colonel Barger worked hard for every sale. According to a colleague, Barger was "a typical land salesman . . . a vanishing breed." Barger was a savvy businessman. He advertised extensively and hired his own sales force. From 1950 to 1954, the sale and resale of lots and homes were slow, and in 1954-55, there was a "lot depression."

As more lots became accessible, an oversupply was created. Many people who bought lots did not have the money to build homes and grew weary of making payments. Real estate companies and lending institutions had the impression that Lake Barcroft would founder, so they were reluctant to make loans. In some instances, banks charged prospective Barcrofters mortgage rates that were higher than the market rate in order to discourage sales. The overall situation prompted some lot owners to sell at a loss. According to a local realtor, one man, on the advice of a resident, purchased a beautiful lakefront lot for \$5,000. He panicked almost immediately when people told him Lake Barcroft was nothing but a swamp; that the developers were fly-by-night; and that gas, water and sewer lines would never be installed. As a result of these reports, the man went to Barger and asked for his money back. Barger took the lot back, refunded the full price and resold the lot for \$9,500. One simply had to believe Barger and his vision of the future. Indeed, from 1955 to 1960, business soared.

## Managing the Project

To maintain some degree of control over construction, Barger insisted that an architectural review committee evaluate the design for each house. This was one of the first committees established by the residents. It was chaired by Ernest Rauth, an architect. Barger followed up by contracting with Rauth's firm, John M. Walton and Associates, to approve the design of all the houses. A minimum living area of 1,500 square feet—small by today's standards—was established to preclude the erection of beach cottages. Construction materials such as cinder blocks and logs were prohibited. Still in all, the houses built in the fifties were not so grand; today many homes are twice their original size.

As Lake Barcroft Estates, Inc., was getting off the ground, Barger set up Barcroft Beach, Inc. (BBI), a management company that listed the lake, beaches and dam as assets. The premise was to provide the lake and beaches to the residents for their own use. A \$60 annual fee was part of each property owner's deed to cover beach and dam maintenance, insurance and lifeguards. The lake was a major inducement to purchase lots, but the lake suffered from uncontrolled pollution and heavy silting. Holmes Run had formed a delta of silt, and Tripps Run emptied into a swamp. These drawbacks turned buyers away and became the focus of considerable debate between the residents and BBI, as it was commonly known, about who would bear the responsibility and the blame for the problems. It took years to resolve the dispute.

Early on, the residents identified the need to improve and maintain the beauty of the lake and to prevent pollution. As houses went up and the population grew, the residents banded together to address these and other issues. Eventually they formed the Lake Barcroft Community Association, which from the very beginning was effective in promoting positive change and anticipating future needs. The early residents set the standard for individual involvement in community organizations, which continues to this day.

# A Community Is Born

**O**n February 23, 1954, the residents of Lake Barcroft approved the bylaws of their homeowners association, officially launching the Lake Barcroft Community Association (LABARCA). Over the preceding eighteen months, the settlers had come together informally to build a new life in a new community and, most importantly, to save the lake. Like most Washingtonians, they came from other places, which created a common bond and a reliance on one another. Their varied backgrounds and individual talents resolved numerous problems—from water sedimentation to litigation. Much was accomplished by the few people who first formed the community association.

## LABARCA

In the summer of 1952, almost two years after development began, fifteen families had completed building their new homes in Lake Barcroft. Ellen Oshins, a politically savvy Californian, suggested that the residents get together and form a homeowners association. The first meeting took place on July 1, 1952, at the home of Bob and Ellen Oshins on Stanford Circle. Ellen's father had patented the bobby pin so their home, the first completed, was beautifully furnished and was landscaped by a nationally known professional. During the next fifteen years, the Oshins were very active not only in the community but also on the local and national scene. Ellen Oshins was the first elected president of LABARCA, a member of the Democratic National Committee and a district delegate to Richmond. For his part, Bob Oshins is best remembered for composing "songs and poems at the drop of a hat," especially a witty ode satirizing internal strife within Lake Barcroft.

The eleven families present at the first meeting formed an Executive Committee consisting of Ellen Oshins, Dana Messer, General Robinson Duff, Ernest Rauth and Colonel Carl Lindstrand. They would serve until the group decided whether or not to write bylaws and organize formally. From the outset, the organization was known as the Lake Barcroft Community Association, the name that would survive until 1992. Colonel Barger was present at a second association meeting on July 15, 1952, where he discussed short- and long-range plans for Lake Barcroft, the role of the Architectural Review Committee and the status of Barcroft Beach, Inc. Thereafter, the colonel avoided association meetings.

Over that next year and a half, residents convened monthly meetings to address the issues at hand. The Executive

Committee appointed several committees—Health and Sanitation (Dr. Chris Murphy), Engineering (Ernest Weschenfelder) and Landscaping (Al Barrett). Alberta Colclaser was appointed parliamentarian. A Nominating Committee headed by Lee Rice drew up a slate of candidates, resulting in the election of officers on October 7, 1953. G. Edward Hacking, aided by Ken Hoyt, set about preparing the association's bylaws. During this period the association achieved several successes—some minor, others substantial.



Dr. Chris Murphy

## Community Action

A 1953 zoning issue showed the power of organization and collective action. Across Columbia Pike from Lake Barcroft, the owner of the 109-acre Darden Tract wanted to rezone the area so that a developer could build 1,000 apartment units. Petitions opposing the project were collected from the neighboring homeowners associations, including Pinecrest, Belvedere and Lakewood. Barger's representative and Ellen Oshins, representing LABARCA, presented the case to the county's Board of Supervisors, citing the negative impact of such a project on roads, schools, sewers and property values. John Webb, a candidate for the Virginia House of Delegates, represented the owner of the Darden Tract. A stormy session raged for ninety minutes and, in spite of Webb's threats to sue, the Board of Supervisors voted against building the apartments. Thus, LABARCA achieved its first notable victory.

The association continued to serve as an active representative and a strong voice for the young and growing community's interests. The association was persistent in taking stands against mass speculative housing in the area. LABARCA provided information for voters about registration and local elections and coordinated mail delivery to roadside mailboxes with the U.S. Post Office. To embellish the surroundings, unique wooden road signs were designed and installed; landscaping and a lighted sign were provided to enhance Entrance One at what is now Aqua Terrace. Workers installed storm drains at the beaches. Other associated activities ranged from determining the legal relationship with BBI to installing a floating boat dock at Beach 2.

## Organization

The bylaws for LABARCA, approved in February 1954, set up an Executive Board, replacing the Executive Committee, consisting of a president, vice president, secretary and treasurer. The South, North and Middle Areas were designated, with an at-large board member representing each Section. Additional committees were established to deal with landscaping and roads, beaches, social activities and membership issues.

Although many questions stirred up controversy and sparked arguments, the debates fostered healthy discussion. In the end, reason and compromise would combine to carry the day. A relatively small number of active participants—there were only 40 members in good standing in March 1954—were able to accomplish a great deal in eighteen months. By September 1954, however, the numbers had increased significantly: 31 in Section One, 16 in Section Two, 37 in Section Three, 12 in Section Four, 8 each in Sections Five and Seven, but none from Section Six—for a total of 112 association members.

Al Barrett, with a background in horticulture, chaired the Landscaping and Roads Committee. As the supervisor of the National Capital Parks in the District of Columbia, the areas for which he was responsible included Arlington Cemetery, the

National Mall, the Pentagon and the Capitol. Under Barrett's direction, association volunteers funded and landscaped the circles in Sections One and Four, Entrance One and the beaches. Barrett arranged to purchase crabapple trees, dogwoods, maples and oaks for planting. Perennials and annuals were available for flower beds in common areas. He convinced the State Road Commission to seed the medians in Sections Two and Three and to repair roads and drainage ditches. Much of the beauty residents enjoy today is a result of Al Barrett's planning and the hard work done by a handful of dedicated association members.

## Early Social Activities

It was not all work at Lake Barcroft, however. For example, 1954 was a very active year socially. The Entertainment Committee, chaired by Sunny Cruden (who was succeeded by Peggy Christians), organized three dances at Walnut Hill, a large estate located on Annandale Road near Gallows Road, which had been the home of Mr. Arnold, owner of Arnold Transit (which later became Washington Metro Transit). Black tie was *de rigueur*. On February 13, 1954, forty couples attended a Valentine's Day Dance at Dardenelles Restaurant. Parenthetically, at one community meeting a vote approved a maximum of \$10 per couple for a dinner-dance featuring buffet, bartender, band and drinks.

Also in 1954, a Spring Fashion Show drew rave reviews. The chairperson of the Children's Committee, Jean Murphy (now Vos), coordinated a very successful Labor Day Swim Meet. Children of all ages enjoyed community Halloween parties. Dancing classes were formed for fifth-eighth graders. Some of these traditions have survived in one form or another. Another innovation, the establishment of a Membership Committee headed by Beatrice Carland, promoted and kept track of association memberships. Block captains greeted newcomers and spread news about Lake Barcroft, especially association activities. This committee prepared and issued the first community maps and directories, which established the format used today.

## Barger and LABARCA

A major driving force behind forming LABARCA was the condition of the lake and the beaches. One association study ascertained the relationship between association members and Barcroft Beach, Inc. Although Colonel Barger owned and operated the lake, the residents wanted some control over its operation as well. Colonel Barger prepared a survey asking for members' input regarding the use of the lake and beaches, which resulted in a 1954 handout that set forth rules of conduct. Aside from addressing the normal safety issues and announcing standard hours of operation, swimming across the lake was prohibited as well as picnicking on the beaches. In addition, members were required to register and provide



**Sherman Vandevender**

identification every time they used the beach, and strict rules limited guests. For his part, Barger hired a popular local high school teacher and football coach, Sherman Vandevender, to oversee security and water safety programs at the beaches.

At about this time, two very different circumstances conspired to end Colonel Barger's vision of a private, gated community. The first unfortunate incident occurred in fall 1952, when some youths trespassed on the property after a Halloween party. A security guard, posted at the Aqua Terrace entrance, saw them toppling the lifeguard stand at Beach 1. After his warning to leave was ignored, he pulled out his .45 caliber pistol and fired a warning shot over their heads. The trajectory was such that the bullet struck an Annandale teenager in the back and killed him. That tragedy put an end to armed guards.

The second incident involved Barger's desire to preserve the rustic charm of the area by building private, semi-paved roads. Because the hilly terrain and heavy rains washed away roadbeds, making them difficult and expensive to maintain, Barger decided to upgrade the roads and turn their maintenance over to the Virginia Highway Department. Even though the roads had always been public, they could no longer be restricted. This outcome, coupled with the shooting incident, put an end to the idea of a private community.

The residents continued to voice their concerns over the condition of the lake. BBI was not sufficiently solvent to respond to LABARCA's complaints about silting and high bacterial counts. In 1953, the lake suffered some minor pollution and swimming had to be banned for a short time. The pollution-induced swimming ban was in effect even longer in 1954, a situation that was unacceptable to residents, who were paying an annual fee to BBI to use the lake. The standoff between LABARCA and BBI reached new heights in 1955 and even caused dissension within the association. Over the next several years, LABARCA persistently pressured the state, county and federal governments, as well as Colonel Barger to face the problems and to take action to solve them. Eventually, the association's efforts proved to be instrumental in obtaining the funding needed to end the decay of the lake and to create a model for best management practices for the operation of the lake.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# The Cadillac Community

*Now listen my children and you shall hear  
Of fifty-six, the famous year  
When Lake Barcroft, the jewel of civilization  
First became a sovereign nation.  
It all started back in fifty-five,  
Though hardly a man is now alive  
Who was there to hear the immortal speech  
Delivered that night by Patrick Henry Teates.*

—from “Blood in the Mud” by Bob Oshins

### A Community at Odds

These are the first of some thirty verses of a poem satirizing a controversial August 1955 meeting, which threatened to split the Lake Barcroft Community Association. Robert Teates (rhymes with Keats) delivered an impassioned speech before the association, the aim of which was to persuade members to take more positive action in the affairs of their community.

*“Let’s be a district and take command,”  
Said our peerless leader with a wave of his hand.  
“But then,” he cried with an awesome frown,  
“It might be better to be a town.”  
He was moving on from town to city,  
All to be planned by his own committee,  
But those soulless clods, the Executive Board  
Insisted that order be restored.*

Teates wanted to establish a special Planning Committee with a chairman to be nominated and elected at that very meeting. The chairman would have the power to appoint four to ten members to explore the following issues:

- possible solutions to the problems of pollution and siltation of the lake by having the authority to deal directly with federal, state, local or other agencies; and
- the feasibility of incorporating the association, organizing a sanitary district for Lake Barcroft, and incorporating the community as a town.

The proposal flew in the face of everything the Executive Board was trying to do. The new committee would be beyond the board’s control, and it would interfere with ongoing initiatives to bring Colonel Barger and government agencies together in an effort to resolve the problems caused by the lake’s contamination. LABARCA’s president,

Donald Birrell, ruled that such a committee would violate the association’s bylaws.

*And appointed a group with spirits mean  
Chaired by a philistine named Robert Green,  
Who tried with talk of making things legal?  
To clip the wings of our soaring eagle.  
(Oh ‘twould have been better to have no committee at all  
or at least one headed by Blumenthal)  
But try as they would with their petty bleats,  
They could not vanquish Sir Winston Teates*

The discussion became heated; a demand was made that Mr. Birrell vacate the president’s chair. Colonel Green, mentioned in the verse quoted above, countered that the appeal was out of order. More discussion ensued, and members of the board protested that any motion to set up a separate entity was a repudiation of all that had been done and was being done. Members challenged Teates to participate in the board’s actions, instead of condemning them. Finally, Dr. Chris Murphy and George Bates brought some semblance of order to the meeting with their statements stressing reason. LABARCA’s business resumed on a steady course.

The rest of the ode is a very witty, tongue-in-cheek battle putting Bob Teates in the shoes of Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Paul Revere, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Jonas Salk and Walter Mitty in addition to Patrick Henry and Winston Churchill mentioned above, as he led the citizens of his nation, “Barcroftia,” against the forces opposed to cleaning up the lake, namely Colonel Barger. Bob Oshins, husband of LABARCA’s founder and first president, cleverly captured the community’s divisiveness with regard to the action, or lack thereof, in trying to solve the problems of pollution and siltation.

### Pollution Problems

The lake had always been the main attraction to living in Lake Barcroft. From the beginning, problems had arisen from the uncontrolled flow into the lake from Tripps Run and Holmes Run. Considerable sedimentation and pollution affected the recreational use of the lake and lakefront lots. Factors outside of Lake Barcroft Estates—including pollution from privies, cesspools and inadequate septic systems—also had a serious impact on the Lake Barcroft watershed. These problems were the result of nearby construction of large



By Year 2001, WID had dredged approximately 400,000 cubic yards of sediment out of Lake Barcroft at a cost of about \$2,100,000. (October 1965)

housing developments and new businesses, which was outpacing the demands for sufficient sewage and causing more runoff. Consequently, the existing sewer system was severely overloaded.

The fledgling community association raised the issues of erosion, soil sedimentation and pollution with Colonel Barger in 1952. His lack of action prompted the association to form an Engineering Committee in 1953. The committee issued a report that outlined the problems and set forth preliminary recommendations. Barger failed to take the necessary steps to rectify the situation, so the association took matters into its own hands.

The first priority was to stop pollution entering the lake from Tripps Run. The association asked the county's Board of Supervisors to accelerate the construction of a new sewer line. The county board also approved LABARCA's request to prohibit use of the old sewer line by any new subdivisions. At the same time, the state's Highway Department agreed to seed roadside banks in an effort to reduce erosion. Despite these measures, in summer 1954 the bacteria counts increased. The pollution was partly attributable to the Tripps Run sewer line but also because of a faulty pump installed by BBI at Beach 3, which led to installation of standby pumps at all pumping stations.

### **Dredging**

The association coerced Barger into hiring a consulting firm, Kendricks and Associates of Arlington, to study the entire watershed area and to recommend solutions to the short-term problem of sewage pollution and to the long-range problem of pollution from silt and erosion. The state's water commission was contacted to ascertain the state's authority over the sources of erosion and drainage. A LABARCA delegation, accompanied by County Supervisor Anne A. Wilkins, presented the association's case to Fairfax County executives.

The upshot of the association's persistence was a decision announced by the Commonwealth of Virginia in July 1954: Fairfax County was assigned to handle the matter. A year of studies and investigations followed. Dr. Chris Murphy, chairman of the Health Committee, tracked the bacterial count at various spots in the lake, and his work with county health officials proved to be instrumental in improving testing procedures. Because environmental concerns were not considered important in those days, there was no instrumentation to conduct on-site tests. Instead, water samples were delivered to a laboratory in Richmond for analysis, thus delaying the process and actually generating artificially higher counts of contaminants in the samples.

Fortunately, there were knowledgeable people in the community who volunteered their time and energy to solve the problems of pollution and siltation: Don Birrell and Joseph Tofani, sedimentation specialists with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Louis Gottschalk, who worked for the Soil Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Gottschalk spearheaded a study that recommended removal of sediment and construction of sediment collection basins. Birrell's Engineering Committee developed a silt-dredging plan that would move silt from one place to another rather than the expensive alternative of removing the silt and taking it away.

The dredging plan called for the creation of two man-made islands and the construction of two underwater silt basins, one at each end of the lake. The Engineering Committee estimated the cost of the project at approximately \$180,000 and recommended that Fairfax County pay 75 percent and Barger pay the rest. Finally, after a great deal of prodding by the various committees and presidents of LABARCA, Barger appeared ready to cooperate. The proposition was presented to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, but the board was not about to take taxpayer money out of the county's general fund to dredge a private lake. As a result of this request, the supervisor of the Falls Church District, Thomas S. Gray, made headlines by referring to Lake Barcroft—in what has become an oft-used snide description—as "the Cadillac Community."

The arguments on both sides were persuasive, and LABARCA representatives acquitted themselves very well. In fact, their suggestion recommending the use of surplus funds from a

1954 Sanitary District bond issue turned the tide. Mason District Supervisor Anne Wilkins provided energetic and skillful support. Ultimately, the county agreed to pay \$90,000 if BBI would pay the other half of the estimated cost of the project. An original provision to reimburse Fairfax County was dropped. The expected negative newspaper publicity ended quickly; one source comparing the political reverberations as "only 3.2 on the Richter scale." As the dredging proceeded, there were cost overruns, but Barger—flinching only slightly—anted up an additional \$23,000 so that the job could be completed by 1962.

So it was that the struggle to clean up the lake was finally funded and the actual work could begin. Problems arose and mistakes were made, but overall this was the beginning of efforts—that continue to this day—to maintain the lake in the excellent condition that residents enjoy and, perhaps, take too much for granted.

While Bob Teates may have been tilting at windmills in his Mitty-esque quest for control, the poem is a humorous reminder that the citizens of Lake Barcroft did indeed win the battle for assistance in cleaning up the lake. The final stanza of Oshins' poem, which he punningly subtitled "A Sedimental Ode," reads as follows:

*So we live a proud nation with a lake that is pure,  
Free of bacteria, silt and manure.  
And each Barcroftian blesses as each new day he greets  
The memory of Walter Mitty Teates.*



# Stuart Finley Takes the Helm

The years 1959-60 changed the course of history for the United States in general and for Lake Barcroft in particular. John F. Kennedy defeated Richard M. Nixon for the presidency of the United States, and Stuart Finley became president of the Lake Barcroft Community Association. While Kennedy's presidency would end after a thousand days, Finley's association with the lake and the community would endure for the next forty years, with no end in sight!

## The Community Grows

Lake Barcroft achieved upscale status in the beginning of the 1960s. Notable politicians such as President Kennedy's press secretary, Pierre Salinger, Attorney General Ramsey Clark, and congressmen Wayne Hays, Melvin Price and Charlie Bennett moved into the community. Over a few short years, the number of families living at Lake Barcroft increased substantially: from 368 in 1956, to 650 in 1958, and 783 in 1960. By mid-1960, LABARCA membership had reached a record high: of the 783 families living in Lake Barcroft, 614—78 percent—were members of the association. Real estate prices were rising as well. By 1960, a number of comparable new homes purchased for \$23,500-\$25,000 in the mid- to late-fifties were reselling for approximately \$32,000. Mary Price, a realtor as well as a resident, remarked, "I'm not here by accident. There is nothing in the Washington area that can hold a candle to Lake Barcroft."

The value of lots increased as their availability decreased. The days of \$3,000 plots were over, and the price of off-lake lots reached \$10,000. Lakefront property, which originally had sold for \$12,000, now commanded \$20,000. One realtor estimated that the lowest-valued lot on the water in the Middle Area was listed at \$22,500 at that time. To close out his enterprise, Colonel Barger continued to sell home sites and parcels of lots to builders; for example, in 1960, one builder gladly paid \$18,000 for a pair of lots that had been valued at \$8,500 in 1958.

## Finley Elected President

By the early 1960s, LABARCA had become an important part of community life, and the success of Lake Barcroft could be attributed to the hard work of association members during the preceding decade. The first competitive election for association president in LABARCA's history, which took place in late

1959, featured two candidates, each highly qualified and dedicated to the community. Ralph Spencer, an official at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, had been asked to run in recognition of his work as chairman of the association's Planning Committee. Prior to his chairmanship, a committee had studied the idea of constructing a community center to be located in an undeveloped area near the dam compound. The majority of association members favored the concept; a 1958 survey polled 273 for and 72 opposed. Spencer promoted the community center despite pessimistic arguments against establishing a "dance hall" on the lake. Ralph agreed to be nominated, and members naturally associated him with the project.

A faction of members who favored dredging the lake convinced Stuart Finley to enter the race based on his expertise in issues dealing with sediment and erosion; he had produced a fifty-part television series called *Our Beautiful Potomac*. Because funding for silt removal had already been approved by Fairfax County and BBI, association pressure mounted to resolve a festering sore point—the gradual decay of the lake. Finley also enjoyed name recognition since he worked as a television news announcer for the local RCA station, WNBW (now WRC-TV). Stuart Finley won the amicable, low-key election, and Ralph Spencer pitched right in, volunteering to take on the task of procuring and maintaining street signs, a responsibility he shouldered for over forty years.

## First Steps

Stuart Finley's first report to the membership was published in the association's January 1960 newsletter and stressed a point articulated by Ellen Oshins: "Sometimes we forget that when we formed the Lake Barcroft Community Association several years ago, our primary motivation was to protect and enhance a community which is a wonderful place to live and where the people are fine neighbors and good friends." To this end, Finley realigned the various committees, dividing some and creating new ones, including Constitution and Bylaws, Directory, Finance, Law and Order, and Silt Surveillance. The reorganization distributed responsibilities more widely and relieved some overburdened volunteers.

With Finley's firm grip on the wheel, the board called for action: modernization of the bylaws, revitalization of street signs, reduction in dues from \$5 to \$3.50 and administration of complaints. The board placed new emphasis on an old

problem, namely, the pros and cons of assuming ownership of the lake and ways to communicate with Colonel Barger on the topic. In 1960, after a teenager had fallen through the ice in mid-lake and almost drowned, a committee was mandated to warn members about the hazards of ice-skating and to look into the issue of ice safety. The association's new treasurer instituted a modern accounting system to track annual income and expenditures, which had quickly grown, as more homes were built, from \$3,000 to \$15,000. (Compare this to Lake Barcroft Association's current annual budget of more than \$200,000).

The *Lake Barcroft Newsletter* became the voice of the community and took on a new look under the editorship of Alan Emory, who was succeeded by Rex Lauck. Previously, the publication had been typed, mimeographed, and stapled; now it was printed and saddle-stitched. Advertisements were included to help defray production costs. The advertising director, Virginia Dunn, used a stable of volunteers to coordinate the solicitation of ads. An ad for Garfinckel's Department Store, which was sold by Stuart Finley, was the first ad to appear in the newsletter. A series of eye-catching and humorous advertisements by landscape expert George Thrasher subtly urged readers to beautify their properties and thereby the community. Eventually, realtors bought space to report on the comings and goings of Barcrofters as well as on community events. Professional photographers captured scenes of the lake and their pictures graced newsletter covers.

Association members authorized spending \$500 to hire a city planner to study the area bounded by Route 7, Columbia Pike

and Sleepy Hollow Road. Oscar Sutermeister came highly recommended as a result of his work with the Ravenwood Park Association near Seven Corners. The long-term planning questions he was asked to address included the impact of development in several forms: commercial enterprises, apartment buildings, subdivisions and the construction of interchanges and streets to handle the anticipated growth in the neighborhoods adjacent to Lake Barcroft. Short-term issues focused on the county's intention to extend Lakeview Drive to Sleepy Hollow Road and Virginia Highway Department's plans to build a causeway over Holmes Run, where the footbridge now stands.

The planned extension of Lakeview Drive to Sleepy Hollow Road emanated from the county's policy to connect adjacent subdivisions, in this case, Lake Barcroft and Barcroft Woods, the latter then in the planning stage. LABARCA and the developer of Barcroft Woods petitioned county planners to eliminate the extension on the basis that it would be used as a cut-through from Sleepy Hollow Road to Columbia Pike. In return, Finley promised that the association would not oppose the causeway at some later date, correctly assuming that the state's Highway Department would barely be able to keep up with repairing potholes. The membership backed this compromise; and a housing cul-de-sac in Barcroft Woods later eliminated the possibility of a cut-through.

## Reviving the Lake

The new Silt Surveillance Committee under Bill Godel was formed to create a siltation and pollution surveillance program. Finley realized that continuous efforts would be required to handle the never-ending problem, but his immediate attention centered on cleaning up the lake. Much has been written about the dredging that has taken place, and the *Watershed Improvement District Quinquennial Report*, published in 1992, goes into great detail about what has been done to make and maintain the lake. Stuart Finley and his colleagues invested considerable time and energy—not only at the beginning but also through the years—to save the lake and tackle its ongoing problems. However, the early volunteers did more than planning and management. Kirk Burns recalls venturing out on a rickety, quivering catwalk at the top of the dam during heavy storms. He and other volunteers helped the damkeeper manually manipulate the old wooden gates to release the heavy flow of water and to prevent the loss of the catwalk-gate superstructure. These were courageous and risky feats performed sixty feet above the streambed amid howling winds and pouring rain.

With the combined county and BBI funding of \$180,000 authorized for dredging, the Executive Board concentrated on gaining access to the silt and contracting for its removal. Local lawyer Carrington Williams, chairman of the Legal Committee, took on the tough and thankless task of



George Thrasher (July 27, 1965)



Four workmen are trying to figure out how to repair the decrepit old dam gates back in the 1960's. These wooden gates were supposed to open automatically during a storm, but usually they stuck. In fact, most of them stayed closed during Hurricane Agnes causing the failure of the Barcroft Dam and thus the creation of the Watershed Improvement District. (May 1963)

negotiating with homeowners for easements to move equipment across their properties. He was successful in this and many other endeavors supporting the community. Later, he would be elected to the Virginia House of Delegates. As for a solicitation for bids, the county, BBI, LABARCA and a consulting engineer each had an interest in the project, thus causing significant delays in the process. Finally, in 1960, the bids for the actual dredging went out; the only response, unfortunately, was \$105,000 over the budget allocated. To stay within the amount of funds available for the project, two major changes had to be made: (1) the idea of moving the silt to another location was dropped and replaced by the construction of peninsulas and islands using the dredged sediment; and (2) a major portion of the requirement to stabilize the banks with stone (called "riprap") was deleted. Eventually, all the parties involved came to an agreement on the project and negotiated a contract with the successful bidder, Morauer and Hartzell, Inc., on May 1, 1961.

BBI lowered the lake level five feet and work commenced. Dredging in those days used high-boom draglines and dump trucks riding on "underwater roads" made of rock and gravel next to two silt basins. The contractor built dikes and filled in the areas that became, in 1962, peninsulas at Beach 3 and Beach 5. Although homeowners at the Holmes Run end of the lake would have preferred to keep their tranquil, water view rather than gaze at a bare island, there was not much choice.

Tree stumps and gravel beds with stones four to six inches in diameter posed special obstacles at Tripps Run. On both sides of the Tripps Run channel, the silt was used to build up lots, which are now located on Beachway and Waterway Drives. Some lakefront property owners seized the opportunity to pay for improvements to their shoreline, thus enhancing the general appearance of the community by ridding the lake of weeds and lily pads.

After eighteen months, the original dredging program came to an end; 116,000 cubic yards of silt were concentrated in new locations creating the Holmes Run island and the peninsulas at beaches 5 and 3. The project had been a massive undertaking for planners and implementers, who often learned from their mistakes. One major error involved the underwater sediment basins at each end of the lake. Designed to collect heavier silt particles, the basins were estimated to have capacities that would last for twenty or twenty-five years. Two years later, they were full, however. Realistically, dredging and the associated costs would prove to be continuing problems. Again, the association successfully addressed the issue by using a little-known law to fund local projects. Under the unlikely title "Small Sanitary District," the association approved self-imposed taxation, which paid for dredging and other important engineering improvements over the next ten years—yet another clever solution to a seemingly intractable problem.



George Ureke (left) and Rex Lauck (wearing glasses) give an award to a Swim Team winner.

# "What Do I Get For My \$10?"

The title of this chapter comes from a 1960s newsletter article written by Colonel Myron Birnbaum, in which he explained to nonmembers and to some disgruntled LABARCA members the various uses of association dues. Aside from covering the costs associated with the directory and newsletter, funds paid expenses incurred in dealings with county, state and federal agencies as well as for the Swim Club, baseball leagues and other youth activities. Dues provided for the Fourth-of-July fireworks and Labor Day festivities, financed minor repairs and covered administrative expenses. In the article, Birnbaum noted that there was absolutely no way LABARCA could afford the high-level skills and experience of its many hardworking volunteers, who donated their time, but added that some community activities required cash.

Nevertheless, being a member of LABARCA provided a great deal more than the activities and projects financed by association dues. Membership offered the opportunity for active participation in a dynamic community. In the 1960s, energetic individuals and groups started numerous programs that were geared to a variety of interests. There was something for everyone: bridge, gourmet cooking, lawn and garden competitions, social clubs, arts and crafts, athletic events and youth activities. LABARCA budgeted modest sums to defray expenses for some activities, but most were self-supporting.

## Activities

At a board meeting in 1960, Dr. Chris Murphy declared, "We're not doing enough for our kids. I'm going to do something." With that, he embarked on an ambitious summer recreation program. That summer's four-week program grew

into ten-week programs in 1961 and 1962. By the third year, 275 youngsters were participating in winter and summer athletic programs like archery, softball, croquet, basketball, badminton, horseshoe tossing, swimming and sailing. Golf, bowling, ice hockey and rifle instruction took place at facilities nearby. Fishing, tennis and gymnastics rounded out the program. Finally, a teen club was formed to provide a social outlet and to promote good works within the community.

All of this took tremendous effort on the part of volunteers, who planned, supervised and provided transportation for the



Lake Barcroft Teen Queen and her court

activities, prompting Jean Murphy-Vos to comment, "This wasn't a Cadillac community, it was a station wagon community." Two teenage directors managed the various programs with financial help from LABARCA, the Woman's Club, several builders and interested individuals. The summer activities culminated in a Labor Day extravaganza called "Beach Olympics," featuring a parade of floats prepared and decorated by the children. A Teen Queen and her court reigned over the festivities and awarded prizes won by contestants in swimming competitions. Selected youths demonstrated their prowess in the various activities they learned over the summer. Finally, beach games, including sack races, three-legged races, balloon blowing and a penny pile rounded out the busy day and signaled the end of summer.

## Water Sports

At one point in the early sixties, Navy Commander Jim Guy, commodore of Lake Barcroft's Sailing Club, ordered thirty-six sailboats for interested families. The Super Sailfish-class became the racing standard because it could be easily righted by a nine-year-old. Given the tricky winds, lake sailing can be a real test of even the best sailors, especially in a sensitive boat like the Sailfish. The lake made a great place to learn the fundamentals. Young and old alike received instruction in sailing. Their skills could be tested on Sundays, when there were racing events divided into categories: juniors, pairs, adults and an open competition. Boat crews earned points for placing

in races over the three months, culminating in a two-day championship match—held at the end of the summer—among the top four monthly winners in each category. The season culminated in an annual awards banquet.

Sherman Vandevender, the supervisor of water safety, and his lifeguards provided swimming lessons at the beaches for adults and children alike. Successful candidates could qualify for Red Cross lifesaving certificates. Using his experience as a former Navy Seal, Sherman also taught scuba diving. By 1964, he had trained 150 students, including 10 women, 20 men, 15 girls and over 100 boys. Twenty-five of Sherman's students belonged to the Century Club, membership requiring dives to one hundred feet in a nearby rock quarry.

In addition to lessons, the lake became a center for competitive swimming. Volunteer coaches begged for time at area pools until a makeshift arrangement of ropes was rigged at Beach 2 to delineate racing lanes. In the winter, swimmers trained at the Alexandria YMCA. The Swim Club evolved into one of the most popular programs for the residents, and the teams did very well against competitors, whose practices were limited to swimming pools. In anticipation of upcoming races, the participants would decorate a float or a car and drive through Lake Barcroft cheering for their team, usually to the accompaniment of loud music. The events provided lots of fun and drew a great deal of good-natured attention.

## Socializing

LABARCA held three dinner dances annually at various locations, including the Fairfax Country Club, the Army-Navy Country Club, the Westwood Country Club and the Marriott Motor Inn. In 1964, Barney O'Rourke initiated junior versions of the adult dances for teenagers and college students. As an example, on one occasion, approximately eighty youngsters attended a hop in the air-conditioned Moose Hall at Bailey's Crossroads. For a dollar per person, guests enjoyed live music by The Echoes. Herb Davis, a local radio and TV personality, presented "two or three bushels" of hi-fi records as door prizes and also presided over the selection of the Lake Barcroft Teen Queen.

In 1962, several young and not so young thespians produced their first show, *Global Glamour*, which was sponsored by the Lake Barcroft Woman's Club. The idea for a show grew out of a Woman's Club member's desire to foster community spirit by providing a venue through which adults and teens could work together for a good cause. In this case, their creative efforts in staging a theater production raised funds for charity. The next year, residents and others filled





the Congressional School's auditorium to see *This Is My Country*. The third stage production, *Tickets Please*, was held at J.E.B. Stuart High School and featured accomplished troupers Millie and Will Fazar.

## Clubs

In 1965, Caroline Jones, a new arrival to Lake Barcroft, brought together fifteen other women to organize a Newcomer's Club to welcome new residents who had come to Lake Barcroft from such diverse cities as Paris, Saigon, Seattle and Bethesda. After a few struggling months, the club's popularity assured its future, and by 1970 membership totaled fifty-eight individuals. After two years, members graduated into so-called fifth wheel groups. Later, residents unified these groups into the Barcrofters to formalize the post-newcomer organization. The founder and first president of the Newcomer's Club, Caroline Jones, later became LABARCA's newsletter editor, an excellent example of how membership in the Newcomer's Club inspires active community involvement.

Founded in 1955, the Lake Barcroft Woman's Club had established an enviable record of community service by the mid-1960s. In addition to sponsoring social activities—such as bridge games, tours, luncheons and an annual picnic—the club raised money for various charities and scholarships. The Polio Foundation praised the Lake Barcroft Woman's Club for distributing over eight thousand vaccines. The club joined the Fairfax County Blood Bank. Contributions to the Fairfax Hospital Building Fund paid for a room and provided decor. A Sick Room Loan Closet—created in 1961 under President Helen O'Rourke—continues to the present. Vonnie Bates had organized the Independence Day Parade for several years, and in 1964, the Woman's Club joined her in sponsoring this popular event. The Easter Egg Hunt, another longstanding tradition, has continued for forty years.

Children living in Lake Barcroft attended four different elementary schools in the 1960s: Belvedere, Sleepy Hollow, St Anthony's, and Bailey's. Activities at these schools also provided a social outlet and an opportunity to help others. The Bailey's PTA held an annual carnival to raise money for school equipment. Parents and children alike worked hard building booths, baking cookies, collecting items for white elephant sales and securing donations from local businesses. Proceeds from the carnival provided record players for every room, television sets for every two rooms, shade trees, flags, opaque projectors, overhead projectors, books, records and cocoa for the school's patrol guards on cold days. It is important to note that parents "considered the work gratifying and derived a feeling of well being from the mission accomplished."

## The International Committee

Dr. J. T. (Dock) Houk formed an International Committee chartered to promote community participation in several areas involving international affairs. As a result, volunteers hosted foreign visitors for tours of Washington, D.C., and the lake. For the benefit of interested residents, members of the committee publicized several agencies that were engaged in supporting foster children in Third World countries. Knowledgeable Barcrofters offered technical and social assistance to underdeveloped countries through DATA International, a "postal Peace Corps." A project to link with a sister community in South America resulted in raising \$500





**Sailing Club Skippers**

for the hundred-family Peruvian village of Chimo, located on the shores of Lake Titicaca, the largest lake in South America; the contribution from LABARCA supplemented a \$1,500 U.S. AID grant that was used to purchase a fishing boat and tackle for village residents.

A noteworthy project in July 1964 was Operation Bus Stop, in which twenty-seven Lake Barcroft families participated. The International Committee cooperated with the Woman's Club to coordinate housing for forty-three students from New Zealand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand and Laos. Their weeklong visit climaxed a year's study at high schools across the nation. While in Washington D.C., the students visited the White House, where they met President Lyndon Johnson; they lunched at various embassies; and they enjoyed a concert at the Watergate. Louise Heid, the head of the group sponsoring Lake Barcroft's part of the program, arranged a party for the students and their teenage hosts, featuring a cruise around the lake aboard Captain Art Schmoyer's fleet of Riviera Cruisers, followed by dinner and dancing. "If the dress, talk and other mannerisms didn't prove how Americanized these kids had become," one adult observed, "the dancing settled it. Wait until their parents see what they learned in America."

Operation Bus Stop continued for several years under the auspices of the American Field Service and led to the exchange of French and American students for a month in the summer. The program, Vacances Studieuses, gave the French students the opportunity to practice their conversational English and to learn about America. Sadly, the program came to an end when relations between the two countries soured. Therese St. Hilaire recalls hosting a young French lad who traced his ancestry back to 1052 and insisted on being treated in accordance with his title, Count. Unfortunately, the boy had developed a mad crush on one of Therese's daughters and became terribly agitated when any other young man came near her. Although the situation was embarrassing at the time, the family laughs about it now.

## **Bowling Leagues**

Dr. Chris Murphy started a duckpin bowling league in 1956. By 1964, twenty-four teams competed as part of the LABARCA Evening League. Teams consisted of five or six members, with no more than three members of the same sex.

The president of the 1963-64 league, Bob Allebaugh, was succeeded by George Baker. In addition, the Ladies Daytime Bowling League fielded twelve teams of four members each. Jean Murphy's Les Miserables team won first place in 1964, with Elsie Kolm's Bowling Bags taking second. The bowling league competitions were popular social events for many years. Each season was capped by a "black tie" dinner dance—always a joyous and festive event, which lasted to the wee hours of the morning.

The Lake Barcroft community seems to have matured in the sixties, as its population stabilized. LABARCA took on more and more responsibilities and Colonel Barger's influence waned. Despite the turbulence in the country in those years, Lake Barcroft residents remained involved citizens. Many of the activities started in the early years survive to the present. Others faded away for any number of reasons: individual leaders moved on, the demographics changed, and more pressing issues arose. The community spirit lives on, however, as is evident in the many ways individuals continue to volunteer their spare time for the good of Lake Barcroft and its residents.

# Signs of the Times

Residents of Lake Barcroft should appreciate the fact that the community's attractive surroundings did not come about by chance. The natural beauty of Lake Barcroft may often be taken for granted when driving, walking or cruising through the area. It is easy to overlook the obvious and never think to question why or how the present setting evolved. Trees and bushes planted thirty-five years ago turned mud flats into gardens. Street signs unique to Lake Barcroft grace the landscape. Curbs and gutters prevent flooding and erosion. Moreover, the lake itself is a glittering gem.

## Small Sanitary District

On May 24, 1962, LABARCA's president, Rex Lauck, and the Executive Board unanimously endorsed a resolution requesting the formation of a Small Sanitary District within the geographical limits of Lake Barcroft's subdivisions. At a general meeting of the association, the members voted for the proposal, which would fund continuing silt removal and other local projects designed to enhance the lake and protect property values. The Fairfax County Circuit Court approved the petition, which imposed a county tax on property owners in Lake Barcroft. For the first year, at a budgeted rate of 25¢ per \$100 on the \$13,034,275 total assessed valuation for all Lake Barcroft properties, the levy amounted to \$32,585.69 for the entire community—about \$35 per year for each homeowner.

The money from the Small Sanitary District financed dredging every two years. For the alternate years, Fairfax County—reasoning that self-help programs stretched the county's treasury—matched the Small Sanitary District funds to improve front footage, that is, curbs and storm sewers. Colonel Barger's original concept—to retain the area's natural, rustic beauty—had featured open culverts for water runoff, but with the passage of time, some of these became unsightly and dangerous ditches. On Whispering Lane, for example, one hole became "large enough to swallow a Volkswagen," according to Stuart Finley's

engineering report. Considerable work was undertaken on Whispering Lane, Jay Miller Drive and Woodland Circle as well as on Blair Road and Stoneybrae Drive. Storm sewers, curbs and gutters mark the results of the special taxation on Lake Barcroft residents.

## Beautification

The creation of the peninsulas and an island from dredged silt gave birth to a unique "rurban" (presumably, rural/urban) project. LABARCA and the Northern Virginia Soil Conservation District cooperated on a project to plant hundreds of trees and shrubs to accomplish three objectives: (1) to prevent the silt from eroding back into the lake; (2) to assure that the plantings were attractive and provided a habitat for wildlife; and (3) to provide an opportunity for the Soil Conservation District to compare growth characteristics of several plants under unfavorable soil conditions. Glen Anderson, a soil conservationist from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, recruited specialists to assist in designing the



Marshall Augustine and Glen Anderson of the Soil Conservation Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture install erosion control jute netting to a newly established demonstration planting at Beach 5. (June 1963)

project and obtained plant materials donated for demonstration studies. Anderson personally supervised the planting, and LABARCA provided the labor in the form of member volunteers.

Some seedlings planted in the 1960s now reach a height of a hundred feet. At the time, fifty bald cypress trees and fifty Japanese black pine trees lined the banks of the island and peninsulas. Shrubs included mountain indigo, bush honeysuckle, *Rugosa* rose and red-stemmed dogwood. Anderson selected each tree and shrub to serve a different purpose: autumn olive berries attract wildlife, dogwoods tolerate "wet feet" at the water's edge, and needle rush swamp grass and six species of dwarf willow trees prevent shoreline erosion. Thus, the community was able to reap the benefits of the full resources of the Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service and its Plant Material Division.

## Street Signs

A little-known historical fact concerns the street signs in Lake Barcroft. In the early 1950s, Fairfax County proposed to erect standard county signs, but Colonel Barger, in keeping with his desire for a distinctive community, decided to design and install handsome wooden signs instead. The county took the position that the residents would have to pay for and maintain any nonstandard signs. The first signs were mounted on nonpressure-treated wooden posts that eventually deteriorated, so in 1960, Ralph Spencer volunteered to take on the task of procuring new signs that included a water theme. At the time, the LABARCA board was reluctant to use membership dues to pay for the purchase of capital improvements; therefore, Ralph was forced to raise the funds needed for the project himself.

A fellow Barcrofter, who was associated with the National Enamel Institute, steered Ralph toward a California company that made enameled street signs. Ralph requested photographs of samples, picked out a green sign with a sailboat motif (made for Redondo Beach, California) and ordered the same sign in blue—at a price of about \$15 per sign. To raise money, Ralph asked for, and received, voluntary contributions of \$4.50 from each family, which paid for the signs, posts, brackets and cement in which the signs were embedded. The state installed the signs at no charge.

Ralph Spencer was responsible for the eighty-two signs in our community for over 40 years. His efforts were not limited to

the initial replacement of the old signs since all sorts of problems would continue to crop up. In the sixties, for example, the signs were plagued by vandalism; many had to be replaced after they were defaced or completely torn away. Youngsters would hang on the signs and break the bolts, which would crack the enamel. Some Cavalier Corridor signs ended up at the University of Virginia, home of the Virginia Cavaliers. Thus, over the years, Ralph was spending countless hours repairing the damage and repainting the signs.

Ralph and Ernie Rauth discussed the problem and came up with a viable solution—using super hard bolts to mount the signs—and this stopped the vandalism. Eventually, the sign company in California went out of business, but Ernie found a company in Falls Church to replicate the originals using aluminum and a sign painter to do the lettering.

Ralph Spencer also took on the task of obtaining streetlights. At first, lighting had to be an extension of existing streetlights from adjacent subdivisions. The county required petitions from homeowners requesting installation of streetlights in their surrounding area. Some residents wanted the county's lights; others preferred to maintain a more rustic setting by having individual homeowners install lampposts on their property.



August 1974

Working through LABARCA, Ralph collected the signatures, went to the county and obtained the streetlights. Today Lake Barcroft has some areas with lighting and some without, but residents can still petition for more.



Before WID initiated the idea of leaf pickup and convinced the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to collect leaves every fall, folks used to burn their leaves creating air pollution and damaging asphalt roadways.

## Street Names

In 1964, Fairfax County adopted a grid pattern numbering system, which renumbered all of the county's streets and also allowed changes to street names. This opened the door for the residents of Lake Barcroft to rid themselves of less-imaginative addresses and to choose street names that were better suited to their surroundings. Colonel Barger's original plan to retain the rustic flavor of the area included "giving streets quaint names such as Tollgate Terrace, Bridge Circle and Grasshopper Drive." In the end, however, he succumbed to rewarding some friends and associates by naming streets after them. For example, Dockser Terrace and Mansfield Road have survived to acknowledge a partner, Charles Dockser, and an associate, Richard Mansfield, respectively. Barger honored Ellen Oshins, the first resident of Lake Barcroft, by naming Stanford Circle after her alma mater.

Taking advantage of the opportunity, LABARCA sent questionnaires to Lake Barcroft residents, soliciting their views on renaming their streets. The idea met with both relish and reluctance. Although most people indicated a general satisfaction with the status quo, there were some exceptions and even some amusing inputs. For example, Reuben Fleischbein wanted his street—Pinetree Terrace—changed to R. Richard vonFleischbein Strasse, and another resident expressed a desire to change Tollgate Terrace to Barry Goldwater Place. A tongue-in-cheek editorial in the Newsletter, admonished the Board, "LABARCA officials, showing their lack of vision and imagination ruled against

both names on the specious grounds that they are too long to fit on a street sign." In the end, the community held a referendum on all the proposed changes, the results of which are listed below.

**Fairfax Parkway**, as Barger had christened the entrance into Lake Barcroft, was renamed **Aqua Terrace**, a name chosen by Barger for the street's proximity to the water. Fairfax Parkway still exists across Columbia Pike from the entrance, not to be confused with the Fairfax County Parkway in Springfield.

**Joallen Drive** and **Joallen Court**, which had been named after Joe Allen, a popular salesman for Colonel Barger, was changed to **Beachway Drive**. The memory of another salesman, Jay Miller, lives on as **Jay Miller Drive**.

**Tallwood Terrace** had been **Allan Sturgis Drive**, named in honor of a salesman who left Barger's employment to seek greener pastures.

**Relee Road** was renamed **Edgewater Drive**, another defeat for Robert E. Lee who had been memorialized in the original street name.

**General Duff Drive**, honoring one of the first Lake Barcroft residents and an active community member, was changed by retiring the title and calling the street simply **Duff Drive**.

**Crosswoods Circle** replaced **DeLashmutt Circle**, which had been named for Basil DeLashmutt, the surveyor who had laid out the streets and lots for Colonel Barger.

**Farm Hill Circle**, never an actual circle, was divided into two names: the eastern portion was changed to **Farm Hill Drive** and the western leg to **Old Farm Road**.

**Lakeview Drive** and **Dearborn Drive** were changed to reflect their actual routes. Early maps show plans for Lakeview crossing over Holmes Run (where the footbridge is today), intersecting with Dearborn and extending to Crosswoods Drive. Because the causeway was never built, however, Lakeview now ends at the foot of Whispering Lane, and Dearborn continues to Crosswoods Drive.

**Malbrook Drive** was replaced by extending the western end of **Crosswoods Drive** to Dearborn Drive.

As LABARCA took over more and more control of the community, Colonel Barger turned his attention to the development of Tantallon, a lake community in Fort Washington, Maryland. His corporation, Barcroft Beach, Inc., still owned the lake and the dam in the 1960s. The colonel wanted to sell BBI to the residents, but his price was too high. Negotiations for the sale came to a standstill. Eventually, circumstances arose that made the purchase possible, and the lake became the property of the homeowners. As events would soon prove, this victory was not without its liabilities.

# "This Lake Is Your Lake"

**I**n the sixties and early seventies, the residents of Lake Barcroft seized the opportunities to purchase both of Colonel Barger's remaining holdings – Barcroft Beach, Inc. and property on which to build a recreation center. Each homeowner was asked in 1970, to contribute \$300 to buy Barcroft Beach, Inc., which included the lake, dam, beaches and some common property. Even in those days, the price of ownership was a real bargain. Visionaries saw the prospect of buying BBI as a golden opportunity and pushed through the purchase, with only about 70 percent of homeowners participating. Now Lake Barcroft homes come with a lake. At the same time, the long-standing proposal to build a recreation center came up for approval by the membership. Diehard adherents overcame many obstacles to make another one of Colonel Barger's dreams a reality.

## Buying the Lake

The idea of purchasing the lake had been discussed for years. In 1964, Carrington Williams, LABARCA's legal counsel, informed the membership that Colonel Barger desired to sell the assets of BBI to the homeowners for \$1.6 million. At a meeting with Andrew Clark, Barger's attorney, Williams tried to negotiate a more reasonable figure. This failed. Williams then proposed the appointment of three independent examiners to appraise BBI's stock. Colonel Barger refused and negotiations ceased.

Five years later, on November 5, 1969, Colonel Barger passed away. Almost simultaneously, Charles Dockser, Barger's partner, also died. BBI now belonged in equal thirds to Dockser's two adult sons and to the Joseph Barger Estate. Ten days after Colonel Barger's death, LABARCA received word that the owners wanted to put their stock on the commercial market or perhaps to open the lake and beaches to the public. This may have been a ploy to establish a good price for the assets or to force Lake Barcroft residents to take action. Shortly thereafter, the owners offered to sell all the stock in BBI to Lake Barcroft homeowners for the non-negotiable price of \$300,000.

Myron Birnbaum, president of LABARCA, appointed Chris Murphy and Bill Arnold to co-chair a committee to look into the purchase, and on November 25, a general meeting of LABARCA members convened to discuss the matter. Strong resident arguments for buying the lake focused on the troubling alternatives to ownership, especially the concern that outside owners might not continue acceptable levels of maintenance and operation. The committee reminded those present that, according to homeowner covenants, residents had the right to use the lake, but it was not an exclusive right. Those in favor of the idea argued that owning the lake would give residents the right to operate it entirely for their own benefit. The members present at the meeting enthusiastically endorsed the concept and voted to authorize the expenditure of \$6,000 for an option to purchase the lake within the next few months.



Carrington Williams

The committee had a great deal to do and very little time to do it. Three major areas required in-depth study: technical issues, legal requirements and financial considerations. LABARCA sent out questionnaires to survey homeowners' initial reaction to the planned purchase; about one-third of the members responded, 85 percent favorably. With this support, LABARCA solicited pledges of \$300 from each homeowner and asked for voluntary prepayment of beach

fees, \$60 per year for up to ten years. Door-to-door solicitations, meetings, letters and newsletter articles ensued. By June 15, 1970, LABARCA had managed to get approximately 70 percent of the residents to agree to participate in the purchase. The \$300 contribution could not be legally enforced, but the \$60 annual maintenance fee was mandatory and gave the homeowner the right to use the lake regardless of ownership.

A July 5 deadline was set for remitting payment to the Lake Purchase Trustee, Millard Rice. At a special meeting on July 8, the subscribers voted to go forward with the sale, despite a considerable funding shortfall; hence, loans would be required to supplement the proceeds from the sale of stock.

The following approximate figures made up the final purchase price of BBI:

#### Income

Homeowners purchase of stock (723x\$300)	\$217,000
Bank loan	50,000
Two personal loans by residents	45,000
Prepaid beach fees	32,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$344,000</b>

#### Disbursements

R. Dockser	\$100,000
W. Dockser	100,000
Barger Estate	100,000
Repayment to LABARCA for options	6,000
BBI operating funds	27,000
Legal, auditing, & settlement fees	11,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$344,000</b>

Once the decision was made and the money collected, more residents contributed to the purchase. With just over one thousand lots, 100 percent participation would have financed the purchase, but only 81 additional subscribers had joined by 1986 when Bill Lowenthal took over the Membership Committee chair. Over the years, his efforts resulted in 163 additional contributors, but holdouts continued to resist participation. To mention one example, an army officer who lived in the community for more than twenty years never contributed, claiming to be a nonpermanent resident. After he passed away, his widow immediately paid the \$300. Today, with only seven holdouts, 1,024 members of the community association have paid the \$300.



**Myron Birnbaum**

#### BARLAMA

On September 21, 1970—less than a year after Colonel Barger's death—ownership of the lake, the dam, beaches and property previously held by BBI passed into the residents' hands. A new nonprofit corporation, the Barcroft Lake Management Association, Inc. (BARLAMA), purchased the stock of BBI, taking over its assets, which included each homeowner's \$60 annual beach maintenance fee. The first president of BARLAMA, Al Trakowski, was assisted by corporation officers Bill Arnold, Eve Haughey and Millard Rice as well as directors Dave Alne, George Peckham, Myron Birnbaum, Phil Johnson and Cal Laning. These individuals, along with Stuart Finley, made up the Lake Purchase Committee

for the most part, but they were only a small number of more than one hundred volunteers who contributed their efforts to the purchase. The BARLAMA board appointed Cal Laning president, Bill Arnold vice president and Al Trakowski secretary-treasurer of BBI, the operating entity.

The purchase of the lake united the community, and a celebration took place in December: the 1970 Gala was billed as a "LABARCA/BARLAMA milestone . . . a nostalgic look into our past . . . to smile at our trials and tribulations." John Wilkins scripted, produced and directed a whimsical and sometimes hilariously funny musical called *A Saga of Silt*. Myron Birnbaum's song lyrics made the evening. At the finale, the entire audience—some three hundred strong—stood and joined the cast in singing the chorus of "This Lake Is Your Lake" to the tune of Woody Guthrie's popular "This Land Is Your Land."

*This lake is your lake,  
This lake is my lake,  
From the Tripps Run Causeway  
To the Beach Three Island  
From the Holmes Run Inlet  
To the old dam spillway  
This lake was made for you and me.*

Lake Barcroft's homeowners were finally able to control their own destiny with regard to the lake's operations. Ownership of the lake meant assuming the responsibilities heretofore borne by Colonel Barger, but it also increased social opportunities for the new owners. One positive result of the purchase included a very successful beach cleanup and maintenance campaign in the spring of 1971. Dozens of residents, young and old, repaired lifeguard stands, fences and docks, thereby demonstrating a new sense of personal responsibility toward

their acquisition. In addition, ownership allowed the lake, beaches and common property to be used for social events. In July 1971, the first big beach party was held, featuring a roast pig luau dinner at Beach 5. In August, nineteen party barges took part in the first annual Barge Party, which was hosted by Eve and John Haughey at 6110 Beachway Drive. A Beach Bake at the Beach 3 peninsula followed in September. Thus, the citizens had come together, worked hard and contributed cash to attain the goal of lake ownership, all in a relatively short time. Now they could enjoy the benefits of that achievement.



## **Building the Recreation Center**

In 1964, at the same time that LABARCA was considering Colonel Barger's offer to sell the lake for \$1.6 million, Barger started planning the development of an area behind Beach 2 known as Parcel A, a fifteen-acre tract that belonged jointly to Barger and Dockser. However, two restrictive covenants in the land title that was recorded in 1952 designated that Parcel A was to be used for "the purpose of a beach and appropriate accessory uses thereto," and that "no residence may be erected on said land." Some residents saw this provision as an opportunity to build a recreation center to be used for Swim Team activities, tennis matches and community meetings. In fall 1966, Barger entered into a written, binding agreement with LABARCA, giving it the option to purchase the tract for

**Beach 1 Cleaner-Uppers**

\$100,000. Two years later, at a general meeting of LABARCA, the members present voted—nearly unanimously—to go ahead with plans to build a recreation facility on Parcel A.

LABARCA proceeded with planning. The concept initially included some residential development of the land to pay for the property, associated roads and for drainage. The planners believed that the restrictive covenants on Parcel A could be removed if all Lake Barcroft residents agreed to do so. It soon became clear, however, that owners of homes adjacent to but outside the Lake Barcroft community and Barcrofters living near Parcel A were adamantly opposed to the idea. In addition, the association's Legal Committee reported several other possible stumbling blocks. The most important centered on

- (1) LABARCA's ability to raise the capital necessary to buy the land and build the facility, (2) the need for the association to obtain a court order to remove one of the covenants and to acquire an insurable title to the property, and, (3) the implications of non-Barcroft residents' use of the recreation center.

To resolve the major issues, LABARCA's Board of Directors requested the formation of two distinct entities that would be responsible for developing the recreation center. One, the Lake Barcroft Recreation Corporation, (Rec Corp) headed by Dan Lecos, was chartered to take title to the property and to construct the facilities. Stock ownership was restricted to Lake Barcroft residents and lot owners for several reasons: (1) to raise capital from within the community, (2) to retain community control of the property, and (3) to coordinate community action aimed at removing one of the covenants. In effect, this measure kept



**A pool party at the Rec Center**

all ownership and business decisions within the Lake Barcroft community.

The second entity, the Lake Barcroft Recreation Center, Inc., was set up as a nonprofit, nonstock, membership-only Virginia corporation, much like other social organizations. Rec Center, Inc., as it was called, was responsible for leasing the property and operating the center. With Ben Morris serving as president, its responsibilities included obtaining a special use permit from the Fairfax County Board of Zoning Appeals. Because of the recreation center's potential impact on non-Barcroft residents, the use permit opened membership to people outside the community. However, the Recreation Corporation retained ownership control within Lake Barcroft (not to be confused with the Rec Center, Inc. mentioned above).

Legal and financing problems, and the death of both owners, delayed the sale of the property until July 1971. It took



another year for the architect, David Gallagher, to obtain county approval of the site plan, solicit bids and negotiate a construction contract. Finally, on August 17, 1972, the long-awaited ceremony took place—the groundbreaking for the Lake Barcroft Recreation Center.

In the meantime, board members of the Rec Center, Inc., which would operate the center, busily conducted membership drives and offered discounted rates for early enrollment. Construction of the recreation center encountered difficulties ranging from bad weather to an unexpected vein of hard rock that required blasting. To add to these setbacks, the county stepped in and voided the

use permit, in effect putting occupancy on hold pending legal appeals. The center finally opened in May 1974.

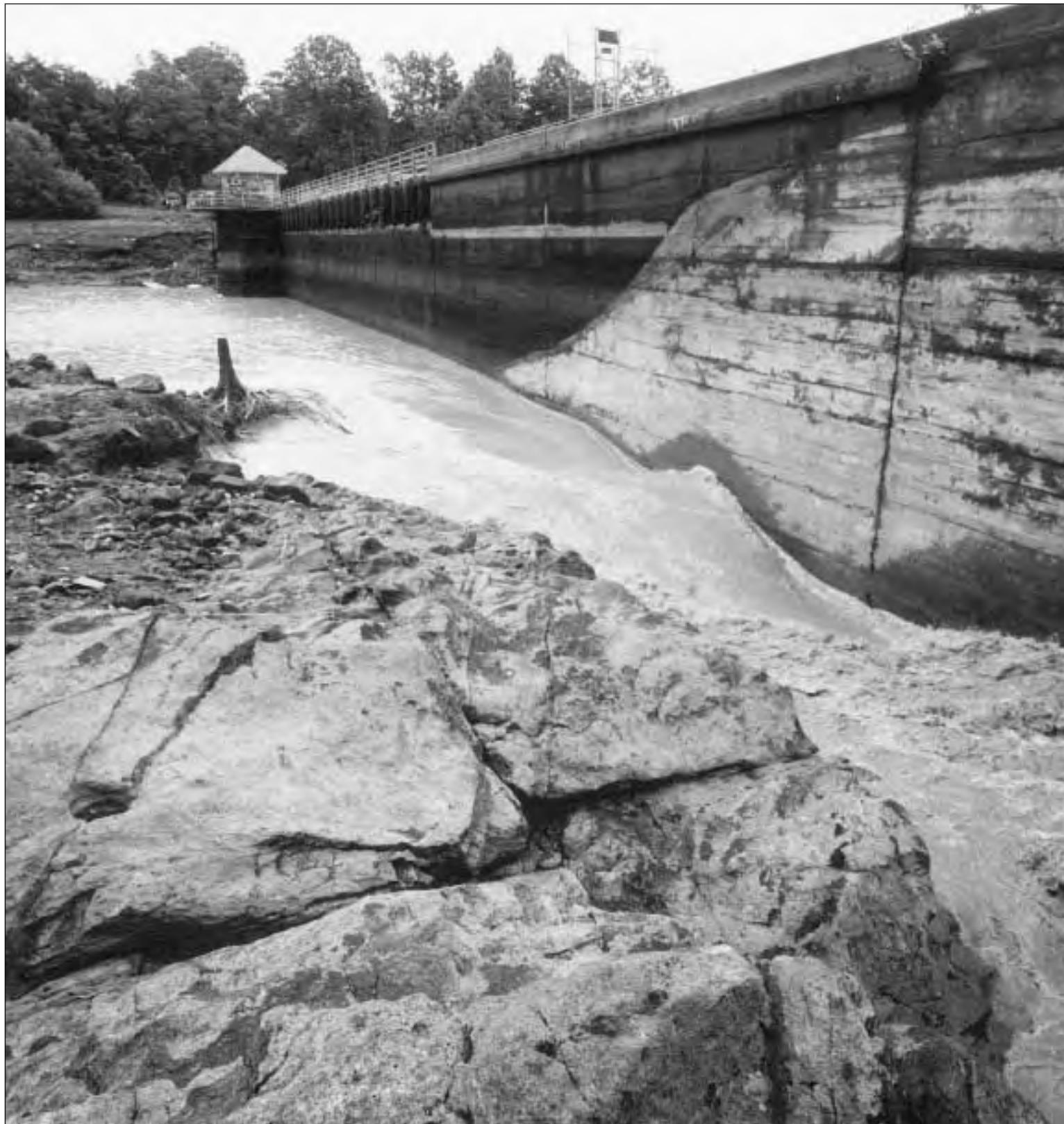
\* \* \*

The efforts to buy the lake and to build a recreation center clearly demonstrated the community's ability to overcome problems and work together for the common good. The next chapter in Lake Barcroft's history dwarfed these achievements. In June 1972, Hurricane Agnes hit and washed away earthen portions of the dam structure, emptying the lake. The new owners faced the daunting task of devising a plan to finance dam repairs and dredge storm runoff from the lake. The endeavor would test the skills of a variety of participants, all



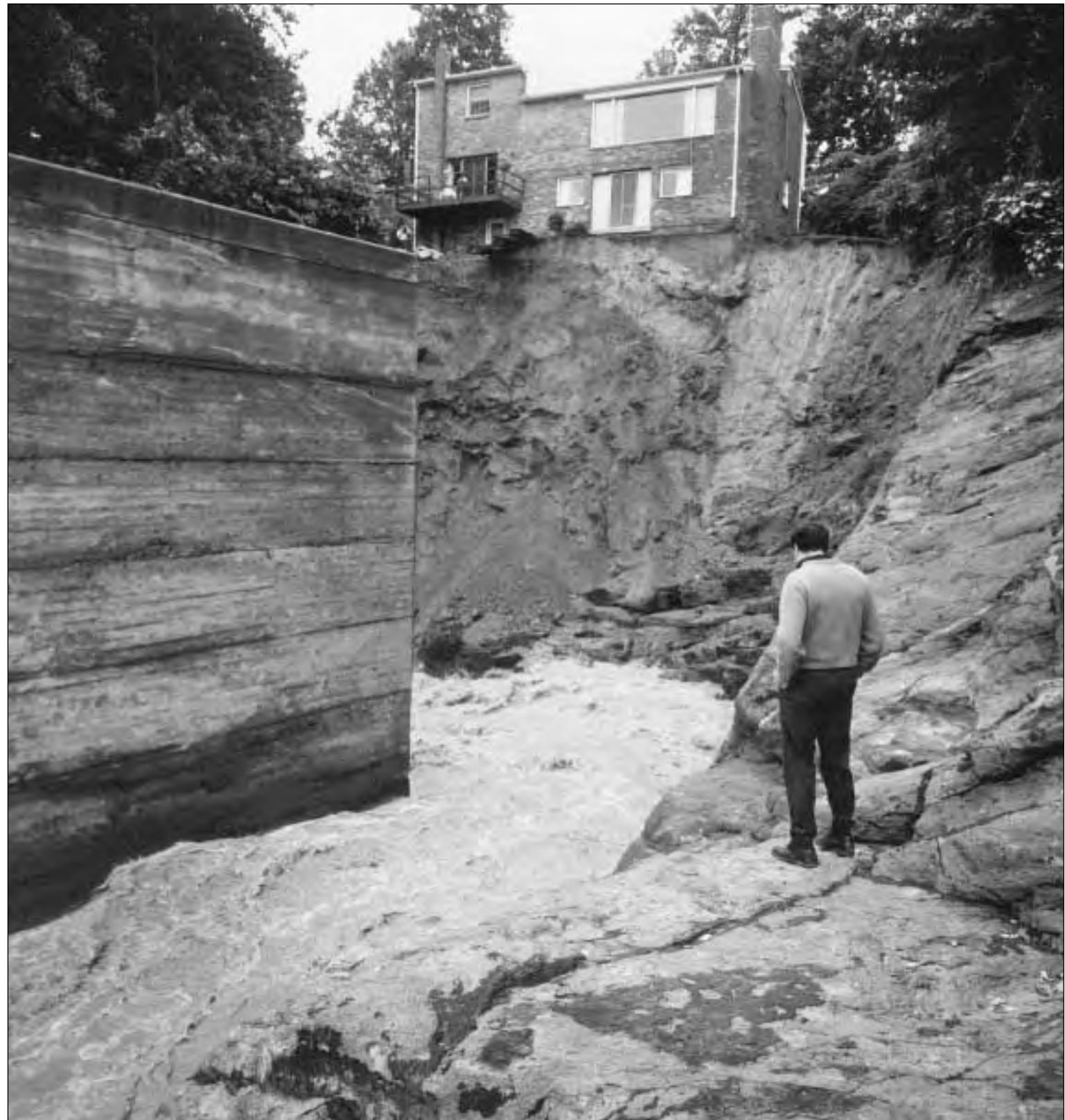
CHAPTER NINE

# Hurricane Agnes



**T**he morning of Wednesday, June 21, 1972, dawned with overcast skies and a precipitation forecast of 80 percent. Nothing unusual. A minor hurricane, designated Agnes, had battered and flooded portions of the Southeast but had lost intensity and was downgraded to a tropical depression. As it barreled up the East Coast, the storm

gathered both strength and moisture from the Atlantic waters and regained tropical storm intensity when it reached the Virginia coast. That evening, it became clear that far more than a storm had hit; by ten o'clock, well-drained roads were six inches deep in water. At about eleven o'clock, the radio reported a breach in the Lake Barcroft dam. It took ten hours



**Hurricane Agnes over-topped the Barcroft Dam eroding away an earthen section which exposed Jack Perkins' basement. (June 22, 1972)**

for the lake to drain substantially, and residents woke up to find their lake empty. In its place was a depressing mud hole.

Nine inches of rain fell between the afternoon of June 20 and the morning of June 22—four inches during just three hours on the night of the June 21. In terms of rainfall alone, Agnes forced nearly every creek and stream in the central portion of the state over its banks, claiming thirteen lives and causing \$222 million in damage. Probably the worst storm ever to hit the dam, the downpour overtopped the dam spillway by three feet. The initial breach occurred at the western, earthen shoulder of the dam at 6200 Lakeview Drive. The rush of water quickly deepened the washout, but finally, the water level stabilized forty feet below the top of the dam. Fortunately, the slow erosion protected downstream interests from the wall of water that would have resulted from a total dam collapse.

## **Damage Assessment**

The call to action was immediate. On Thursday, after the rain had subsided, the situation at the dam was assessed by representatives of the county, state and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as well as by consulting engineer, Jack Gillett. That evening, seventeen residents active in lake affairs met and quickly agreed that the dam had to be repaired. The attendees spent the remainder of the meeting discussing how to fund the repair and what kind of governmental approval would be needed. To keep residents informed, Myron Birnbaum published special mimeographed issues of the newsletter, which covered the situation as well as the actions taken by various committees. The first issue of the Lake Barcroft Mini-Newsletter appeared just thirty-six hours after the washout.

The situation was confusing for Lake Barcroft residents whose emotions ranged from dismay to anger. Everyone had ideas, mostly about ways to shift the anticipated cost of repairing the dam to someone else. The community did, however, have a few resources of its own. LABARCA had a taxing district, called the Lake Barcroft Local District, which was managed jointly by the chairman of the association's Engineering Committee, Stuart Finley, and a representative of Fairfax County's Department of Public Works, Jack Liedl. At the time, it had approximately \$75,000 in its treasury for operations. The second resource, Barcroft Lake Management Association, Inc., (BARLAMA), had been created to buy the lake and controlled the assets needed to operate both the lake and the dam; but BARLAMA was actually in debt from loans to purchase the lake. Whitman, Requardt Associates, Inc., a major regional engineering firm in Baltimore, served as the engineering consultant to LABARCA's local taxing district; Jack Gillett, a partner in the firm with extensive experience in dam construction and operations, was LABARCA's primary contact.

## **Public Reaction**

The search for outside funding began immediately. Liaison with county and state agencies was spotty at best. Stuart Finley was on the Board of Directors of the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District (NVS&WCD) and had solid ties to the Virginia Water Control Board. But the Lake Barcroft dam disaster had created a massive public relations backlash, which was fueled by negative newspaper articles and editorials railing against any public funding for repairing the dam. The press coverage intimidated politicians and local officials, who might otherwise have been inclined to help.

On July 5, some seven hundred residents attended a special meeting at J.E.B Stuart High School to hear a report on the emergency facing Lake Barcroft. Dave Alne, vice president of BARLAMA, set the keynote for the evening by calling for restoration of the lake, improvement of facilities and preservation of health and safety. Other presentations addressed major issues, such as County Executive George Kelley's blunt appraisal that it would take at least two years to repair the dam and his dire pronouncement that county money could not be used to finance private, recreational uses by Lake Barcroft residents. For their part, members of the audience clearly indicated their opposition to any solution that would open the lake for use by the general public. During a spirited question-and-answer period, residents made a case for a reduction in their property taxes as a result of the decreased value of homes situated around a dry lakebed.

At the meeting, engineer Jack Gillett estimated that it would take three months to prepare a preliminary report of the damage, seven months to remove the vast quantities of silt deposited by Hurricane Agnes and nine months to do long-range planning. After Gillett was pressured to expedite the process, the preliminary damage assessment was issued in four days. Fortunately, the study reported that the masonry section of the dam had not sustained any structural damage. Before starting work on the dam and removing the silt, a stuck valve at the bottom of the dam had to be opened so that the remainder of the lake could be drained. To accomplish this task, Cal Laning, a retired U.S. Navy admiral and BBI manager, dangled in a boatswain's chair at the end of a sixty-foot rope to free the valve. And Cal was sixty-eight years old at the time!

By August 1, more questions had arisen. At a second emergency community meeting chaired by John Haughey, president of BARLAMA, Stuart Finley spoke about the necessity to petition the state to impound water to fill the lake. Finley cautioned that the \$300,000 that was estimated for restoring the dam to its former status might not meet the court's requirements for a more elaborate spillway and for other improvements. After all, the storm had also flooded some downstream properties located in the floodplain. The Parklawn Recreation Association sued BARLAMA and BBI,



accusing them of failing to prevent floodwaters from damaging their properties. Something would have to be done to prevent such a reoccurrence.

### Search for Funding

Funding was the most pressing issue discussed at the meeting. Possible sources included a loan from the Small Business Administration (SBA), a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contract through an Office of Emergency Preparedness grant, a

Local District increase in the tax rate, insurance proceeds and, possibly, direct contributions from the residents.

Representative Bob Leggett (D-Calif.), a Lake Barcroft resident, pushed for an SBA loan to BARLAMA. In a follow-up action, County Executive Kelley proposed that Fairfax County grant \$764,000 as a partial loan and advance local district taxes so that future revenues could be used on the present crisis. Strong public reaction to the proposal prompted the county's Board of Supervisors to cancel a public hearing and to table the proposal indefinitely. As quoted in a

Washington Post article, entitled “No Fairfax Funds for Barcroft: Citizen Anger Halts Lake Aid,” Supervisor Jack Herrity of Springfield stated: “People don’t want their money going to the rich.”

Mason District Supervisor Alan Magazine attributed the public response to media reports that falsely implied that some of the money would be a gift from county taxpayers. In the same Post article, Magazine explained that half of the money would be a standard 4 percent loan, and the rest an advance on Lake Barcroft Local District tax funds due to the community. Magazine also noted that, without the lake, a downwardly revised property tax assessment could cost the county up to \$200,000 a year in lost revenue. Also in the article, Stuart Finley pointed out that 80 percent of the funds needed for repairing the dam would be spent to protect downstream properties from uncontrolled floodwaters. Finley made a strong case that the sediment in the lake belonged to the county, and it was therefore the county’s responsibility to remove it. The county, of course, never acknowledged this argument.

The arguments about funding eventually reached the floor of the U.S. Congress. The House Select Committee on Small Business wrote to the SBA administrator opposing Lake Barcroft’s application for a \$500,000 SBA loan to repair flood damage to the lake. In explaining its decision, the committee wrote that “the use of federal public funds, whether by grant or loan, to provide recreational and land value opportunities at a reservoir or lake for citizens or organizations that exclude the general public should be avoided.” The committee’s conclusion in turn triggered a speech in the House of Representatives by John Rarick of Louisiana, who labeled these actions reverse discrimination. In the weeks following the community’s second emergency meeting, it became increasingly clear that a mechanism had to be found that would enable Barcrofters to finance reconstruction themselves.

## **Watershed Improvement District**

Stuart Finley’s position on the Board of the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District was fortuitous. Having been chairman, Finley was particularly attuned to the state’s laws regulating water and had studied the Virginia code pertaining to water conservation. One day, while chatting with Charlie Koch—then executive director of the NVS&WCD—about the terrible problem facing Lake Barcroft, Finley suddenly recalled an obscure law that allowed establishing a Watershed Improvement District (WID): a WID could be created to preserve land endangered by silting and sedimentation from stream channels. Finley raced home to review the advantages and requirements of a WID in private.

By establishing a WID, the district could levy taxes for its purposes—in this case, restoration of the lake—and issue bonds. Unlike the Local District that collected taxes for

dredging, a WID would not be under the control of the County Board of Supervisors. Instead, the WID would be governed by the NVS&WCD and administered by three landowners appointed by that agency to serve as trustees. The creation of a WID and the passage of the tax and bond issue required affirmative votes by all of the following: (1) a majority of the qualified resident voters, (2) two-thirds of the landowners, and (3) two-thirds of the landowners representing two-thirds of the land area. The real challenge for the association would be getting landowners out to vote; the failure to vote would, in effect, count as a negative vote.

By October, Whitman and Requardt had prepared a study for long-range improvements to the dam. The principal points guiding the study called for stability against major storms such as Agnes, the need for a fairly constant water level, and economics. At a meeting with the LABARCA Engineering Committee, Jack Gillett presented three designs: (1) restoration of the status quo, (2) a fixed dam, and (3) a dam with automatically controlled gates. He recommended the latter and the committee agreed, opting for a hinged Bascule gate mounted in a 150-foot by 12-foot notch that would be blasted into the top of the dam. With this design, when the water level rises, a float sends a signal to the operating mechanism to lower the gate, and the gate then rotates on its hinge, allowing water to flow over the gate. The operation is electrically controlled, hydraulically activated and completely automatic.

The NVS&WCD Board of Directors held a hearing on November 15 to determine the need to establish a Watershed Improvement District for Lake Barcroft. Ed Pritchard, BARLAMA’s attorney, presented the petitions that were gathered in favor of establishing a WID. He explained the proposal and emphasized that the state’s attorney general supported creating such a district for Lake Barcroft. The board approved the petition and authorized the next steps toward formation of the requested WID. Almost simultaneously, SBA approved the \$500,000 loan, with one unexpected provision: that no funds be advanced unless the project’s completion could be assured. The SBA loan therefore hinged on the creation of the WID, landowners’ referendum approving its formation and certification by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Commission.

On November 30, Fairfax County Circuit Court Judge Bernard Jennings conducted a hearing on Lake Barcroft’s petition to impound, that is, the request for authorization to reconstruct and improve the dam and, as a result, to impound water in Lake Barcroft. Jack Gillett testified for two hours on the plans for repairing the dam and installing the Bascule gate. Three downstream adversaries of the proposal—the city of Alexandria, the Parklawn Recreation Association and a warehouse owner—disagreed with the plan that Gillett presented and asked for further study. In the end, Judge Jennings granted Lake Barcroft’s petition and ordered a decree



**WID Special Election (April 24, 1973)**

authorizing the reconstruction and improvement of the dam in accordance with the plans that had been submitted.

One by one, the hurdles were cleared. The next issues facing the residents centered on three referendums. The first required landowners to mail in advisory ballots to the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District indicating their approval of the proposed WID. By the end of January 1973, 892 residents had voted, with an overwhelming 98 percent approval rate. As a result of that show of support, the NVS&WCD created the Lake Barcroft WID on January 31, 1973, and petitioned the circuit court of Fairfax County to conduct a poll that would: (1) further ratify the creation of the WID, (2) authorize a tax increase, and (3) sanction bonded indebtedness of up to \$2 million.

### **The WID Vote**

After considerable legal battles on where and when to vote and who could participate in the voting, the big day—April 24—arrived. LABARCA, under the leadership of George Overby, shouldered the responsibility to get out the vote. A battalion of members, organized by section and block, canvassed neighborhoods. A last-minute Mini-Newsletter emphasized that “No vote is a no vote.” The polls opened at Belvedere School on Columbia Pike at six o’clock in the morning under the watchful eyes of Woman’s Club volunteers. Other club members served as poll watchers, baby-sitters, drivers and telephone callers. The association made every conceivable

attempt to produce a strong turnout, and their efforts were successful. For example, several residents who were unable to walk voted at the curb; and a female resident on the way to the hospital arrived on a stretcher to cast her vote.

The polls closed at seven o’clock in the evening. Within minutes, residents began sorting, checking and counting ballots. Fifty or so of those most deeply involved in the campaign gathered at Il Castillo for refreshments and dinner while awaiting the results, which were finalized around midnight. The May newsletter was able to report success under the headline: “WE MADE IT!” Of those voting, the

response was overwhelmingly positive—between 98.4 and 99.4 percent casting their ballots for the WID, and therefore a self-imposed tax. Even if invalidated ballots, no-shows and unreturned absentee ballots were considered negative votes, all three referendums passed by margins of approximately 20 percent. To celebrate, LABARCA sponsored a party on May 4 at the Gerbers’ home on Crosswoods Drive, where the USS Dam Victory was floating in the pool, flying a banner that said “For Those Who Give a Dam.”

With funding assured by the results of the referendum, work to repair the dam could begin. It had taken a year of concerted effort to arrive at this point, and the victory marked the community’s greatest success to date. The newsletter’s editor, Myron Birnbaum, praised Stuart Finley “for identifying the Watershed Improvement District provisions of the Virginia statutes as a means for financing lake restoration,” and reminded readers that “he shepherded and masterminded the enterprise every step of the way.” John Haughey, president of BARLAMA, received Birnbaum’s kudos “for his magnificent job of detailed planning and community leadership in carrying through the all important Second Referendum.”



One section of the new, 150-foot Bascule Gate being lifted onto the Barcroft dam by crane. (February 28, 1974)

## CHAPTER TEN

# A New Beginning

**A**s a result of the April 24, 1973, referendum, Lake Barcroft's residents voted overwhelmingly to create a Watershed Improvement District (WID) for dam repairs and silt removal. On May 18, the circuit court found the WID to be validly established under the provisions of the Virginia code and approved the issuance of WID bonds. The community could take pride in the unified way the residents responded. It was not easy to raise new taxes, but the solid support for the referendum demonstrated the community's commitment to overcome adversity and start over.

### **The WID**

Virginia's Watershed Improvement Act, passed in 1955, had never been used before the Lake Barcroft WID was formed. The act allows an area within a soil and water conservation district to form a special governmental unit outside the control of the county government. A WID is authorized to perform certain administrative functions, to levy taxes and to borrow money. The governing body of the newly created WID—the board of directors of the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District—appointed three Lake Barcroft landowners as Lake Barcroft WID trustees. The Board delegated to these trustees the authority to make the day-to-day decisions necessary for operating the lake. In addition, the trustees assumed the responsibility for estimating the annual operating budget to provide the basis for the supplemental tax levy on the Lake Barcroft community. General oversight of the WID is exercised by the state and the NVS&WCD.

Prior to the formation of the WID, the Barcroft Lake Management Association had directed the dam, lake and beach maintenance operations of its subsidiary, Barcroft Beach, Inc. Funding for BBI operations came from the annual \$60 maintenance fee paid by each homeowner. After the WID was established, the relationship between the WID and BBI had to be recognized and defined. To this end, the BBI board and the WID trustees signed an agreement giving WID the right to conduct operations on BBI properties. WID funds could be allocated for any reasonable purpose that supported soil and water conservation, but money could not be used for recreational purposes. With the agreement in place, the responsibility for dam repair and silt removal passed to the WID trustees.

When the WID was approved in January 1973, a slate of ten candidates was nominated for the three trustee slots. Edwin

Deagle was chosen as one of the first trustees. Edwin had written his Ph.D. dissertation on the difficulties associated with small municipal bond issues. His background and expertise clearly aided the trustees in addressing the next challenge—raising \$2 million by selling tax-exempt bonds. Navy Captain Dick Anderson, a specialist in Navy contracting, was also selected as a trustee. When the nomination list was first published, Sandy Augliere noted that all the nominees were men and proposed that a female be included. She suggested Sally Determan, a distinguished lawyer, who was chosen and eventually became trustee chairperson.

At a May 2 meeting of BARLAMA, the board elected Dave Alne president. One of Alne's major responsibilities was to maintain liaison with the WID trustees; other board members were assigned to work with LABARCA, BBI, Fairfax County and local communities. The overlapping activities of various organizations required close coordination to avoid mutual interference. Alne initiated several programs, then, as WID funds became available, he handed off responsibility for the projects to the WID trustees. The silt removal plan was a good example; a significant amount of planning was done before the WID trustees began to solicit contracts for the work. BARLAMA also planned extensive improvements to the beaches.

### **The Bond Issue**

On June 19, WID trustee Sally Determan and several other residents gathered in a brokerage office in Rosslyn, where they were connected to Richmond by telephone. At noon, bids for the WID bonds were opened in the Virginia state treasurer's office, and \$1.5 million of the bonds sold at an average interest rate of 5.744 percent. BBI purchased another \$500,000 worth of WID bonds, using an SBA loan in the same amount. Because the SBA loan carried an interest rate of only 1 percent, the interest for the entire \$2 million bond issue averaged 4.55 percent, a very good rate at that time. The trustees cleverly invested the funds in federal bank notes yielding 7 percent or more and timed their maturity to coincide with payments due on WID contracts. Bondholders collected interest, while principal payments were put into a fund to pay off the bonds at their expiration. Interest and principal payments on the bonds owned by BBI were in turn used to regularly pay the Small Business Administration, retiring the original SBA loan on schedule. The last of the bonds expired in spring 2001.



Under the Local District fund, the special tax for lake maintenance that was levied on Lake Barcroft residents had been 40¢ per \$100 of assessed value. On July 1, 1973, the new tax rate went into effect and jumped to \$1.00 per \$100 of assessed value, which in those days was 40 percent of market value. This special tax is paid in addition to the real estate taxes levied by Fairfax County and is collected by the county and then conveyed to the WID. The law requires that the tax rate be set at a level that at least pays the annual indebtedness on the WID bonds. The Local District fund was ultimately folded into the WID fund, creating one special assessment. This is the system by which the WID operates today.

Another source of possible income centered on a \$680,000 insurance policy on the dam, which was an asset of debatable value in the wake of Hurricane Agnes. The policy covered a concrete and masonry dam that had sustained little damage. The insurance company argued that the damage to areas adjacent to the dam was not covered. After BBI filed suit in circuit court, the insurance carrier offered between \$8,000 and \$10,000 to pay for damage to the concrete apron, but BBI rejected the token settlement. As the trial approached, the insurance company started serious negotiations, and BBI eventually accepted a compromise offer of \$170,000, which, in accordance with the terms of the SBA loan, was used to reduce debt principal.

### **Restoring the Lake**

To finance preliminary planning and contractual obligations, the county transferred \$60,000 in Lake Barcroft Local District funds to the WID. The WID funded a joint effort by the



consulting engineers and the Allis-Chalmers Corporation to design the Bascule gate and to modify the dam. In July 1973, as WID funds became available, fabrication of the Bascule floodgate started at the Allis-Chalmers plant in York, Pennsylvania. The design called for a 150-foot by 12-foot hydraulically operated gate that would be able to handle storms more powerful than Agnes. The workers at the plant referred to it as "Lake Barcroft's Watergate," and added, "it won't leak." This was a not so subtle reference to the Watergate scandal that was unfolding at the time, which was marked by numerous stories leaked to the press. Fabrication of the gate and modification of the dam required careful planning. To meet a promise to revive Lake Barcroft by summer 1974, the trustees set a target date of April 30 for completion of the floodgate project. If the work was not completed by then, the contractor would be penalized \$1,000 per day for up to thirty days.

While committees and individuals worked on various projects, vegetation was growing on the lake bottom. Several enterprising residents seized the opportunity to plant vegetables in the fertile soil, reminiscent of World War II victory gardens. According to one apocryphal story, two youngsters, noted for their indolence, exhibited a great deal of energy in preparing, cultivating and planting their garden in the lakebed. It was the first sign that the boys were actually taking an active interest in something so mundane. In the end, their crop flourished, but alas, the plants turned out to be marijuana.

In July, the WID trustees leased a Mud Cat dredge to remove silt from the base of the dam. The operator sucked up the silt and pumped it to a receiving basin on the lakebed. Tree stumps, sunken boats and even car parts jammed the sluice valve. Once workers cleared the sluice, the remaining water



drained into the stream below the dam. Work then began to fill in the washouts at the ends of the dam. The contractor positioned a custom-made cage over the sluice, thereby preventing further obstruction. This operation was so successful that the WID trustees eventually purchased a Mud Cat for the community and hired an operator to pump silt into decanting basins.

By mid-August 1973, residents could see visible progress in the restoration of the washout and the removal of silt from the lake. These efforts proceeded apace during the summer and fall. Front-end loaders scooped dry silt into trucks and cleaned out coves that had been clogged by the discharge from storm drains. The contractor worked long hours to complete the land excavation before the arrival of freezing weather. As many as fifty trucks at a time carted away silt and moved fill to the earthen sections at the ends of the dam.



By November of that year, the washouts were completely restored. This allowed for partial filling, which would not interfere with dam modifications and installation of the Bascule gate. Even though the lake's level was below the normal water line, it still spawned visions of winter ice-skating and summer swimming. This step



**Stu Finley, Dave Alne, Sally Determan and Congressman Tom Davis.** An original trustee, lawyer Sally resolved many of WID's early legal problems. (June 24, 2001)

forward also inspired plans for improving the beaches, including redesigning the parking lots, sanding extensively, installing boat racks and erecting a large, deep-water diving tower at Beach 4. Lakeside residents were encouraged to repair bulkheads; and ads for concrete Lincoln Logs appeared in the *Lake Barcroft Newsletter* along with instructions on how to construct a seawall.

The idea of a diving tower sparked some controversy within the community and indicated that a conflict could exist between two community organizations. As part of an overall plan proposed by a landscape architect, construction of a diving platform did not meet any opposition at the September BARLAMA meeting. In November, however, a resident raised an objection at a LABARCA meeting and later wrote: "There is a railroading tactic, an effort to run roughshod, if you will, over the entire body of the lake owners to accomplish this construction." This was an unfortunate accusation, but Dave Alne showed his fair and firm leadership by making it clear that the platform would not be built without the support of Lake Barcroft residents. To get residents' feedback, a mail-in coupon was inserted into the *Lake Barcroft Newsletter*, thereby enabling residents to express their opinions. Although not a political issue per se, the platform, pardon the pun, was soundly defeated.

Lloyd Swift and Rex Chaney assumed the responsibility for restocking the lake, with valuable advice from Robert Martin, a state official and noted expert on fishing. Steps taken during the restoration of the lake created fish habitats by deepening the shoreline, removing silt and revitalizing the silt basins. On April 30, 1974, under Lloyd Swift's direction, adult species of bluegills, red-ear sunfish, channel catfish and fathead

minnows, along with five thousand immature large-mouth bass, were released into the water at Beaches 1 and 4. Thus, desirable predator dominance was established, with the maturing bass feeding on the offspring of the adult bluegills and sunfish. By October, after the lake had been filled, twenty bass were caught and released; in six months, the same bass had grown from a length of four inches to eleven, demonstrating the ecological soundness of the lake.

### **A New Dam**

During the winter and spring of 1973-74, contractors started the final phase of the dam restoration. The installation of the Bascule gate required careful preparation. The dam, built to exceptional specifications in 1913, was constructed of cyclopean masonry, which is concrete that contains

stones weighing one hundred pounds or more. Dynamite blasted a 150-foot notch out of the hard surface on the top of the dam, where the spillway and the old gates had been located. The front or downstream side of the dam was heavily scaffolded, and four slits were cut into the dam face for installation of the hydraulic pistons that would raise and lower the gate. Huge cranes then hoisted the gate and pistons into place. Once installed, electrical connections energized the control mechanisms that were located in a secure building on the dam. In late April, once everything was in place, the sluices were closed and the lake began to fill. With the new automatic dam in operation, the water level rose slowly but surely. In fact, when Admiral Cal Laning, BBI's manager, was asked how long it would take to fill the lake, he reportedly replied, "Give me another Agnes—about fifteen minutes." The process was constrained by an impoundment provision that the lake had to continuously discharge an amount of water equal to average inflow. A few above-average storms filled the lake by mid-summer.

Some might say that Hurricane Agnes was the best thing that ever happened to Lake Barcroft. A sixty-year-old dam now conformed to 1974 specifications. The silt removal program hauled away about ninety thousand cubic yards of muck and gave birth to a plan for long-term sediment control. At Beaches 3 and 5, decanting basins improved silt control and are still operating successfully. The water quality improved and the fishing promised to be better than ever. Finally, with the WID in place, funds became available for programs ranging from gypsy moth control to lake water aeration. The two-year Agnes recovery saga was a remarkable achievement for the community. It signaled a new beginning.

# The Second Generation

**A**ccording to demographers, a generation consists of the thirty years it takes for a newborn to reach maturity. Thus, the late 1970s and early 1980s marked the beginning of Lake Barcroft's second generation. From 1950 to 1975, the community progressed through all the stages of growing up: Lake Barcroft developed from a wilderness into a modern, residential community; residents formed organizations to fulfill their needs and desires; the community purchased the lake and upgraded the dam; and property owners approved a special tax assessment that provided a continuous funding stream that would ensure maintenance of the lake as well as the surroundings. The first generation of Barcrofters bequeathed a legacy of dedication to keeping the lake alive and the community involved. For the next twenty-five years, the second generation faced the prospect of maintaining the community on a steady course.

After Hurricane Agnes and the restoration of the dam, the lake once again became a magnet for social activities. Barge parties, the revitalized Sailing Club's Sunday regattas, Fourth of July fireworks and Labor Day sports competitions all marked the return of the residents' lives to normal. The organizations responsible for managing the community continued under the guidance of dedicated individuals, but not without major changes. During the second twenty-five years, the environment—both man-made and natural—had its ups and downs, but overall it improved, because the residents were able to rekindle the spirit needed to maintain Lake Barcroft as a unique place to live. This chapter attempts to briefly chronicle lake history from 1975 to 2000 by focusing on social, community and environmental issues.

## Social Activities

The lifestyle in Lake Barcroft offers something for everyone. One group, the Lake Barcroft Woman's Club, has been providing services to its members as well as to the community since 1955. The Newcomer's Club Welcoming Committee for new residents and periodic social events have helped that organization flourish; membership in the club is often an individual's first step in community involvement. Members of the Barcrofters, a social organization, plan and organize parties and outings. In the mid-1970s, Joe Theismann, the popular and outgoing Redskins' quarterback, opened a restaurant at Bailey's Crossroads, which became a popular community watering hole. Theismann contributed his considerable talents as auctioneer at fund-raisers sponsored by the Woman's Club,

and his restaurant provided prizes for Labor Day events. Other memorable outdoor luau's and picnics coordinated by Trippi Penland provided an opportunity for residents to celebrate the thirty-fifth anniversary of Lake Barcroft in November 1986, the fortieth in November 1991 and the fiftieth in October 2000.

During the seventies and eighties, several stage shows featured talented Barcrofters. In January 1976, Jerry Meyer produced and Naomi Zeavin directed *Barney's Place*, a musical extravaganza spanning the twenties, forties and sixties. Jerry gave an outstanding performance imitating Elvis Presley for his ecstatic teenybopper audience, including Jerrie Manteau, Sally Trebbe, Jean Meyer and Jeanne Fellows. This show was so successful, it was repeated during the Woman's Club's Arts '76 Festival. A sort of sequel—*Barney Goes to München*—was performed by the same cast at the Oktoberfest held at St. Anthony's Church. Naomi Zeavin, an accomplished actress and gracious neighbor, wrote, directed and produced several shows: *Lighthouse Keeper's Daughter* in 1974, *Cabaret* in 1977, *Let's Take a Trip* in 1979, *Ego-Mania* in 1983, *Don't Call Us, We'll Call You* in 1988 and *This Is My Life* in 1990.



**Jerry Meyer does his Elvis thing**

An abundance of hidden talent, waiting for the right opportunity, surfaced during all these performances, which were staged at local high schools.

In the late 1980s, from his conversations at cocktail parties, Dave Alne realized that a large number of impressive personalities with fascinating careers resided in Lake Barcroft. As a result, he started the Barcroft Fourth Thursday Group, a forum for distinguished residents to share their knowledge and experience with their neighbors. The first session featured Larry Fox, a noted authority on international economics, who led a discussion on the fall of the Berlin Wall and European politics. Over the next three years, subjects covered at the gatherings ranged from science, to history, psychology, music, government, business and beyond. Personages included Dr. Jerome Karle, a Nobel laureate in chemistry, Tom Donlan, an editor at Barron's, Leon Fuerth, an assistant to the vice president for national security as well as various professors and book authors.

## Community Organizations

Until 1991, three organizations shared responsibilities for community affairs and lake maintenance: the Lake Barcroft Watershed Improvement District (LBWID), the Lake Barcroft Community Association and Barcroft Lake Management Association. LBWID—originally created as a governmental agency to deal with the emergency repair of the washed out dam—gradually evolved into an environmental service agency. This metamorphosis came about after early, rigid interpretations of the Virginia code gave way to more realistic

assessments of WID functions. After decades of working experience, the WID's operational purview has expanded from a narrow focus on issues involving soil and water to broad, community-wide environmental concerns.

The Board of Directors of the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District appointed three trustees to oversee the day-to-day operations of the LBWID when it was first created in 1973. Appointed a trustee in 1976, Dave Alne became trustee chairman in July 1977 and has continued in that post to the present, a tenure lasting twenty-three years and counting. Beginning in the early sixties, Stuart Finley was a director on the board of the NVS&WCD for twelve years, six as chairman. Shortly after the creation of the LBWID, counsel advised Stuart that his volunteer activities assisting the LBWID constituted a conflict of interest; accordingly, Finley resigned his directorship on the NVS&WCD board. He continued his volunteer management role as a consultant to LBWID until 1988, when he was retained as the WID's director of operations. For the last quarter-century, Dave Alne and Stuart Finley have been the driving forces behind the stunning record of the Lake Barcroft Watershed Improvement District.

The trustees continue to control LBWID operations under the direction of the NVS&WCD board. At present, aside from the review and approval of the budget and the appointment of trustees by the NVS&WCD, the LBWID runs itself. In 1976, the trustees asked several residents to become LBWID associates, a new category of volunteers who assist the trustees in the operation of the lake. With expertise in various disciplines, the WID associates attend meetings held by the

LBWID trustees but do not vote on issues.

The LBWID has been responsible for a wide range of improvements: dredging is the most visible WID operation—and the most expensive; the aeration system turns over the water in the lake, creating cleaner water by aerating sediments at the bottom; upstream silt traps and diversion debris traps help to control pollution; street cleaning removes tons of contaminants that would otherwise wash into the lake. WID employees stabilize stream banks and monitor water quality. The LBWID provides nonphosphate fertilizer for purchase, including



**Jack Keith, Lloyd Swift, Fred Chanania, Freeman Williams, Dave Alne, Waltrout Nelson, Dick Werling, Stu Finley, Walter Cate, Ki Faulkner. (October 1986)**

delivery, as just one means of controlling algae. In addition, LBWID issues bulletins covering such diverse topics as instructions on building a seawall, the basics of lawn care, composting, gypsy moth control and control of geese. The list of LBWID's responsibilities is long, but all of them are directed at safeguarding the Lake Barcroft watershed and ultimately Chesapeake Bay.

Section 319 of the federal Clean Water Act provides for the development of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to control nonpoint, that is general, pollution. As a result of the tireless efforts of LBWID's trustees and director of operations, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has issued 319 grants to the WID for implementation of practices appropriate for use by older urban communities elsewhere in America. Various agencies and landowners cooperated to undertake projects in the entire upstream 14.5-square-mile watershed. Between 1995 and 2000, the total contributions by the EPA (60 percent) and LBWID (40 percent) that were used to demonstrate urban BMPs amounted to \$875,000. In 1999, the state conferred on LBWID a Virginia Watershed Award for the development of Best Management Practices under EPA grants.

In 1988, the board of directors of both LABARCA and BARLAMA voted to merge the two organizations into the Lake Barcroft Association (LBA). Ron Oxley, Larry Nixon and Loren Hershey prepared a feasibility study, and the presidents of the two organizations, Sam Rothman and Pat DiVito, endorsed the concept. The goal was to create a single entity that would eliminate conflicts, enhance residents' participation in community affairs, provide one board of directors and create a single balance sheet with sufficient funds to continue lake activities.

Unfortunately, a personal-injury lawsuit against the two organizations put the merger on hold. In 1987, a young man injured himself during the swimming leg of a LABARCA-sponsored triathlon. Even though he had signed a liability release form, there was some confusion about actual liability and blame. BARLAMA's insurance company eventually settled the suit in 1989, and LABARCA's did the same in 1991. With the final obstacle removed, substantial majorities of both memberships approved the merger on February 4, 1992. The assets of LABARCA were transferred to BARLAMA, and the name was changed to LBA. Members elected T.J. Gauthier as president and Trippi Penland as vice president of the newly merged association. Thereafter, a single community organization represented the members on issues concerning the lake and routine community affairs: safety, security, social events, publications and neighborhood improvements. Throughout the long history of the community association, Marykathlyn Kubat, followed by her daughter, Chris Lawson, have been the lake managers overseeing the general administration of the association.

The Lake Barcroft Recreation Center, another popular and highly visible organization, was also forced to make some changes. After almost eighteen years of operation, the Lake Barcroft Recreation Corporation faced a dilemma. Although the Recreation Center had spawned successful swimming and tennis teams, the facility itself had deteriorated. In particular, the tennis courts were in need of repair, and the swimming pool pumps required replacement—all of which entailed costs well above the anticipated income from membership dues. One proposal offered to build new clay courts for the Recreation Center in return for erecting a commercially managed bubble for indoor play during the winter months. A survey conducted in 1995 indicated strong opposition to the year-round tennis facility, however, and the concept was dropped from consideration. With no other suggestions and no resources for the additional funds needed, the Recreation Center was forced to close its doors. The ultimate fate of Parcel A will probably be the construction of some single family dwellings, which will be a part of Lake Barcroft.

## Nature and the Environment

So much had been accomplished up to 1975 that some complacency may have set in thereafter—a bust after the community's earlier boom. In 1979, an article in the Lake Barcroft Newsletter pointed out that the community's overall appearance had deteriorated, and the author called for Lake Barcroft to "pull up its socks." In 1982, another resident, noting the tenth anniversary of Hurricane Agnes questioned whether community spirit was waning. As evidence, he cited the meager turnout at LABARCA's quarterly meeting: 38 attendees, representing less than 2 percent of all households. He also noted the general deterioration of property care and maintenance.

Much of the lasting beauty of Lake Barcroft can be traced to individual efforts by its early settlers, but eventually the overwhelming volunteerism of the past diminished. Community leaders recognized the need to find another way to maintain the common grounds as well as private lots. In 1985, the LABARCA Improvements Committee requested donations needed to cover a budget gap. Six individuals who were interested in starting an Improvements Program donated \$1,528. More than 275 families followed their lead and sent in checks, mostly in the amount of \$25, resulting in \$7,000 in contributions to be used for landscaping and beach improvements. Residents living on Lakeview and Waterway Drives contributed \$1,425 to pay for mowing median strips. By their positive response to the Improvements Program, Barcrofters essentially issued a mandate to LABARCA: they wanted results, not excuses.

The ensuing changes were dramatic. Gardeners rehabilitated the shoddy and overgrown entrance at Aqua Terrace, and the committee instituted a continuing maintenance program.



**Responding to a WID engineering design by Ken Young of GKY & Associates, VDOT constructed a curb and gutter system to replace roadside ditches at the intersection of Nevius Street and Beachway Drive to improve safety of a school pedestrian crossing.**

Landscaping companies mowed the medians and replaced weeds with attractive turf. A long-range plan outlined much-needed improvements to the sixteen circles in Lake Barcroft. A special LABARCA subcommittee resurrected the dormant Garden Contest. More than 25 percent of the residents participated in a landscaper guidance program and an even greater number undertook pruning, cleanup and revitalization activities—all of which significantly enhanced the appearance of the community. In response to a petition from Barcrofters, the Virginia Highway Department installed a stoplight at Aqua Terrace. The Improvements Program continues to this day, under the capable leadership of Ernie Rauth.

Fred Chanania, an LBWID trustee and frequent contributor of nature articles to the newsletter in the eighties, studied the flora and fauna of Lake Barcroft. He and his colleagues annually conducted bird surveys for the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count. Fred also led nature hikes to the varied habitats that are found around the lake, including upland forest, open meadow, cattail swamp, riverine and lacustrine. The hikers identified birds, species of trees and bushes as well as animal tracks. Fred was also instrumental in setting up nest boxes to foster the nesting of bluebirds and wood ducks.

In 1980, John Aldrich wrote extensively about the birds found in the locale, basing his newsletter contribution on his 1942 survey of the area surrounding Lake Barcroft and his catalogue of the nesting bird population. In the article, he compared his 1942 survey with a 1979 survey conducted in the same study area—some ninety-two acres—that had formerly consisted of unbroken, dense forest. The difference between the two surveys was not so much in the numbers of birds, but rather in the species that were lost or gained. Completely gone were red-eyed vireos, ovenbirds and scarlet tanagers. The second survey found only two pairs representing the once very common wood thrush; cardinals, song sparrows, mockingbirds and blue jays had replaced them. Numerous catbirds, robins and house sparrows, visible in 1979, were totally absent in 1942. Unchanged species included the red-bellied woodpecker, crested flycatcher, Carolina wren, white-breasted nuthatch and hairy woodpecker. Aldrich reached the conclusion that the bird population had adapted to suburban habitats and was more abundant in 1979 than it had been in 1942.

Readers may be interested to know that, at one time, Lake Barcroft had its own "Beetle Queen." Mary (M. E.) Young took on the task of eradicating Japanese beetles from the community. Her request for donations from the homeowners resulted in an 83 percent response. She used the money to buy bacteria infected with milky spore disease, which she spread throughout Lake Barcroft. The disease remains in the soil and kills off the Japanese beetles residing there. The concerted efforts of LBWID and concerned homeowners continue to keep another blight—the gypsy moth—under control. In the past, numerous newsletter articles warned residents about this tree-killing menace and explained how to treat infestation. When the insects start to proliferate, LBWID warns homeowners and implements new techniques to eradicate the pests.

As for other wildlife, in 1977, a bear made its way to Stonybrae Drive, forcing game wardens to tranquilize the animal in an effort (fortunately, a successful one) to capture it. A family of foxes lived near the Recreation Center, and one of them appeared on Lakeview Drive as recently as 1999. In the last few years, deer have been visiting the Community Garden, and raccoons are still getting into residents' garbage at night. The suspected presence of rabid raccoons in the area had raised considerable concern in the early 1980s, and even though the

threat has been reduced, it continues today. A much more persistent problem has involved beavers, which, at one point, were trapped and moved to other locations in the state after they had destroyed several trees. Muskrats also enjoy the lake's shores, where they can burrow their dens behind seawalls and under banks.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Agnes in 1972, the community instituted a fish-stocking program to replenish the fish lost as a result of the storm. The project called for a precise balance of large-mouth bass, bluegill and other sunfish, catfish and minnows in order to sustain growth and provide sport fishing in the lake. By the mid-1980s, fish counts indicated an imbalance in the bluegill and bass populations. Under harvesting had allowed bluegills to proliferate, thereby adversely affecting the bass in the competition for space in the lake. The release of 5,000 walleye fingerlings—which feed more frequently and consume more fish than bass—managed to solve the problem of bluegill overpopulation. About the same time, sterile grass carp were introduced in an attempt to reduce the annoying shoreline vegetation known as elodea, a common lake plant. Grass carp eat up to three times their weight every day and can gain five to ten pounds each year. As a result, they cleared the shoreline, and today there is very little evidence of elodea around the lake.

In the mid-1990s, the WID staff noted an overabundance of common carp, an exotic plant-eating fish that can out-compete all other fish species in the lake. Under a state permit, tons of common carp were harvested, relieving the stress on the large-mouth bass that occupy the same shallow water environment. While ridding the lake of carp, the staff noted the presence of a new fish species, whose origins were unknown—the gizzard shad. Ken Kopka, WID's staff director, recommended creating a new sport fishery, using striped bass (known in some areas as rockfish), which would also reduce the profusion of the newly discovered gizzard shad. Thus, to provide the needed balance among the fish population as well as enhanced recreational fishing, the WID stocked the lake with five thousand striped bass—fine fighting fish that grow rapidly to their mature weight of ten-fifteen pounds.

Another eyesore appeared in the early 1990s: algae blooms, which looked like green paint spills, covered substantial portions of the lake. WID sought advice from a distinguished biologist, Dr. Dennis Cooke of Kent State University, who had been the first president of the North American Lake Management Society. Dr. Cooke visited the lake and studied

monitoring data that had been collected earlier. He determined that the aeration system, installed in the early 1980s, was underpowered and might even be doing more harm than good. He recommended a system that stirs up the aerated water and injects oxygen into the mud at the bottom of the lake, thereby preventing phosphorous from recycling into the water column, which is how algae blooms are generated. Dr. Cooke's valuable advice resulted in the complete replacement of the aeration system, including the lake's underwater hose network and a quadrupling of the amount of electrical horsepower input. The work eliminated the unattractive algae blooms.

\* \* \*

For the past twenty years the administration of the lake has been running practically on automatic. The community associations and clubs have continued to make Lake Barcroft a fun and comfortable place to live. Beautification of the common properties has progressed. Newsletters and directories come out periodically and are probably taken for granted. A new service, the Lake Link, founded by George McLennan and George November ties the community together electronically. The WID has paid off bonds and is maintaining the lake and the environment. Dredging, a major problem of the past, is conducted on schedule. While other lakes in the area are slowly dying from lack of care, Lake Barcroft continues to be a model for lake Best Management Practices. The residents have every reason to be proud of the support each homeowner gives to make Lake Barcroft such a desirable place to live.



Damsels throw Large Mouth Bass into the lake.



December 1977

# The Lake Barcroft Woman's Club

**T**he Lake Barcroft Woman's Club has an admirable 45-year history of volunteer and financial support of charitable and community causes. These efforts are sometimes taken for granted, which may in part explain why, in these times, it has been increasingly difficult to enlist new members. The goal of this chapter is to recognize the unique work performed by the club and to inspire new members to carry on its often thankless but invaluable projects.

## The Beginning

In 1955, the Lake Barcroft community, already five years old, had yet to grow out of its rustic beginnings. The houses, approximately 165 of them, were few and far between, especially in the North and Middle Areas. No enterprising cartographers had mapped the muddy trails called roads. Without the Potterton Causeway over Tripps Run, traveling around the lake from one area to another was more like going on safari rather than visiting a suburban residential development. Many new residents were young couples just starting families. Few wives worked outside the home, most preferring to stay at home with the children. The setting was ripe for an organization to unite the young pioneering women.

In early 1955, Elsie Kolm and Helen O'Rourke (now Helen O'Rourke-McClary) were discussing life in Lake Barcroft when Elsie mentioned how much she missed her Women's\* Club in Mantua, a nearby suburb. The conversation led to the idea of creating a similar club in Lake Barcroft. Because Elsie had considerable experience in club activities, especially federated Women's clubs, she invited interested women to her home to explore the possibilities of forming the Lake Barcroft Woman's Club (LBWC). A representative of the Northern Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs was present at this introductory gathering to explain the advantages of that organization. A month later, at the first meeting of the new club, the twenty-eight charter members elected Elsie president in a candlelit ceremony. In April 1956, the Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs accepted the club's application for membership in the Northern Virginia District.

At first, the club membership was limited to fifty, the maximum number that could meet comfortably in someone's house. Being young couples with new homes, furniture was

sometimes scarce, but the women made do with anything available. As the club grew, meetings were held in the hall above the Annandale Fire Department and later in the Epworth Methodist Church. Once the club had more space, membership limits no longer applied. By September 1958, members numbered more than a hundred, making LBWC one of Northern Virginia's largest women's clubs. In that first year, the members chose blue and white as the club colors and the sailboat as the club's motif. Jean Stephens wrote that the members shared many laughs about the "big decisions" they had to make, such as whether to vote by raising their hands or by a voice vote of "aye" or "nay."

The mission of the Woman's Club is detailed in its bylaws: "The purpose of this organization shall be to bring into closer unity the women of Lake Barcroft in order to promote through their common interest the cultural, educational and environmental welfare of the community." From the beginning, the club directed its efforts toward neighborhood projects and philanthropies. The members combined social activities with fund-raising projects to raise money for worthy causes. They spent precious hours volunteering their services to assist various charitable organizations. At the same time, the women came together to further their common interests, such as literature, art, bridge and travel.

## Typical Projects

The members worked hard their first year, setting the club's course for the future. The first LBWC project assisted the Northern Virginia Pre-School for the Blind by donating three tables, two bulletin boards and Christmas cookies. Subsequently, members collected \$270 for one child's tuition for a year. The club also presented the Lake Barcroft community with an American flag to fly over the Aqua Terrace entrance. Volunteers helped operate a bloodmobile and an X-ray mobile. In addition, members spent considerable time driving children to and from the Child Development Center on Cherry Street—sometimes referred to as the Cerebral Palsy School—which was chartered in Richmond by club member Therese St. Hilaire and her colleagues on the United Cerebral Palsy board.

The club's first major undertaking involved the new Fairfax Hospital, which was then under construction on Gallows Road. In 1957, members voted to pledge \$500 a year for four years to provide a memorial room in the new hospital due to

\*Most Women's Clubs use the plural of the noun. The Lake Barcroft club uses the singular.

open in 1960. In 1961, the hospital honored the Woman's Club by mounting a plaque outside the room that its members were helping to support. It took five years of bridge luncheons, fashion shows, white elephant sales, bake sales and dances to raise the \$2,000—the largest amount raised by any women's club in the area at that time. The club followed up a year later by sewing new drapes for their room.

The Woman's Club also made valuable contributions to the community. The club's Safety Committee recommended posting "No Parking" signs at school bus stops usually blocked by contractors' vehicles. To raise money and as a safety measure, the club sold first aid kits for automobiles. To emphasize safe cycling, the club organized annual Bicycle Rodeos for children, which included bike inspections by county police officers. In 1960, the club presented life rings and ropes to every fourth house on the lake. The rings were prominently displayed close to the water for use in case of an emergency.

By 1965, the club had grown into a wide-ranging service organization, providing support to several diverse institutions, including the Medical College of Virginia, Manassas Home for the Aged, CARE, local libraries, the Fairfax Association of Retarded Children and the Fairfax Symphony. In addition, the club paid dues to the Federation of Women's Clubs, which, in turn, supported national charities. The club instituted an annual \$200 college scholarship award for deserving J.E.B. Stuart High School students who showed an interest in pursuing teaching as a career. The members created the "Sick Room Loan Closet" as a way to make equipment available to residents recovering from illnesses. Within a few years, the "closet" contained several pairs of crutches, two walkers, a commode, plastic bed pads and a \$75 wheelchair purchased with the proceeds from a sale of potted plants run by Churchell Ruegg and Frankie Hill. Now known as Home Health Aids, the loan closet still exists and includes a wide variety of items that are available from club member Millie Schreiber.

In 1970, Esther Moeschl, chairperson of the club's Safety and Education Committee, sponsored an essay contest at J.E.B. Stuart High School. Over 350 students submitted entries on the subject, "Good Citizenship in a Modern World," a topic chosen to reflect the goal of the contest: "to inspire the students in their duties as citizens." The chair of the English Department at a community college judged the essays. A high school senior

was awarded a \$25 savings bond as a grand prize, and the winners in grades 9-12 each won \$10 cash prizes. In 1980, Naomi Zeavin came up with the idea for J.E.B. Stuart seniors to compete in an LBWC-sponsored essay contest dealing with the free enterprise system. The club not only won a merit award for the most outstanding project related to that theme from the Northern Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs but also raised \$600 from various contributors for prizes for the winners.

Over the years, members of the Woman's Club have developed an effective and fair routine for collecting and distributing charitable donations. Three needy organizations are chosen annually by popular vote of the membership. An example of a current recipient is the Annandale Christian Community for Action (ACCA), a coalition of twenty-six Christian congregations who volunteer to provide assistance to the needy, such as emergency prescription and rental funds, a child development center, food for empty cupboards, furniture and clothing. The Bailey's Crossroads Volunteer Fire Department, a close and good neighbor, is another organization that has received help from the Woman's Club. In all, some sixty charitable organizations—from Special Olympics to Hospice of Northern Virginia—have been the beneficiaries of LBWC members' efforts.

## Activities

The LBWC sponsors a variety of activities for its members. Monthly club meetings during the autumn, winter and spring feature guest speakers, with topics ranging from local politics to flower arranging to current events. At one meeting in the



Volunteer Fire Department Committee including Joe Theisman.

late 1950s, Nancy Emory and three other members of the Fairfax Symphony played string quartet selections. Nancy played on a cello that she had made herself! Her husband, Alan, a news correspondent, then reported on his trip to the Soviet Union and the Middle East with Vice President Richard Nixon.

Bridge became a long-term club staple with the inception of Friendship Bridge Parties; this was the genesis of the Bridge Marathons and evening bridge matches that continue today. Some years ago, Wendy Cline started a Walkers/Garden Group. With the advent of Lake Barcroft's Community Garden, the gardeners went over to that endeavor. The Walkers Group continues to meet once or twice a month and takes walks either around Lake Barcroft or in nearby parks.

An International Relations Group within LBWC featured visits to foreign embassies, the Pan Am Building, International House, the United Nations, the U.S. Department of State and the White House. Eventually, the club became affiliated with the American Field Service, and for several years, members hosted foreign exchange students under a program called Operation Bus Stop. International hospitality was truly tested during the blizzard of 1966, when four students from Colombia and their State Department guide were stranded at the home of Kyle and Althea Davis from Saturday evening through the following Monday afternoon. Asked how she managed with five extra mouths to feed, Althea replied, "We finally ran out of eggs, but they were delightful guests."

The Woman's Club held an annual Talent Night for members desiring to enter their arts and crafts in a competition divided into several categories. For example, the art division awarded prizes to novices, semi-pros and professional artists; knitting, crafts and sewing divisions also contained subcategories. Winners of the LBWC contest went on to display their talents at the annual Northern Virginia Federation of Women's Club's craft show, winners there went on to the state competition. In 1980, at the Virginia State Federation of Women's Clubs convention, Sally Alne's drawing won first place, Judy Romney's watercolor entry took second in that category and Agnes O'Neil placed first for her knitted afghan.

The Woman's Club has maintained a Book Club since the seventies. At the beginning of each year, members recommend titles to longtime chairperson Marjorie Macone. Selection of the books for that year hinges on a quick check to see if there are enough copies available in the library system. Members read a particular book each month and then meet to discuss it. Titles have ranged from Gore Vidal's memoirs, *Palimpsest*, to



Nobel Prize winner Naguib Mahfouz's *Palace Walk*. Men are invited to the last meeting of the year, which recently has featured a potluck dinner at Bill and Alice Lowenthal's home. The books discussed at these sessions are almost always works of nonfiction, and the men do most of the talking—whether they have read the book or not.

In 1964, the Woman's Club joined Vonnie Bates in running Lake Barcroft's Independence Day Parade, a tradition that continues to this day. Vonnie had founded the event a few years earlier, when she marched fifteen pot-banging children through Lake Barcroft's streets. Asked what made her think of having a parade, she replied, "It just seemed like the right thing to do." Eventually, the parade transformed into a community-wide event, complete with decorated bicycles, cars, ballet dancers and a marching band. The responsibility for this event recently passed to the Newcomers' Club. Even after so many years, it is still a pleasure to hear the J.E.B. Stuart High School band playing John Philip Sousa marches along the lake as the parade proceeds from Beach 5 to Beach 3.

The club sponsored the community's first Easter Egg Hunt in the mid-sixties. The annual spring event quickly became popular with children ranging from toddlers to ten-year-olds. In just a few short years after the tradition started, the club members were hiding a thousand brightly colored plastic eggs filled with jellybeans; a penny reward was given for each egg that was found and returned. The Halloween Parade had its origins at about the same time, and it has also become an annual ritual. The event, long chaired by Jean Meyer, usually includes the J.E.B. Stuart High School band in addition to a fire engine or police car.

The Lake Barcroft Woman's Club decided to drop out of the National Federation of Women's Clubs in 1993. The LBWC had become more of a neighborhood club than a regional service organization, and members felt that they got little in return for the time and effort they spent supporting the national federation. Another persuasive argument for ending their affiliation involved the annual dues of \$700 that they paid to the federation: not only did the expenditure put a strain on limited resources, but it was also money that could be better spent on local charities.

The efforts of the Woman's Club in a variety of areas did not go unnoticed. In the early 1960s, the American Cancer Society presented a Certificate of Appreciation to the club in recognition of its many contributions. Sears-Roebuck and the General Federation of Women's Clubs issued a joint citation for "Community Improvement, 1962-64." The club received the Vogue Pattern Service Award for teaching high school girls the art of sewing, and the club's contributions to Project CARE resulted in the "Golden Rule Award." These are just a few of the many awards honoring the club's contributions. In time, the responsibility for all charitable fund-raising events, such as Easter Seals, was transferred from the community association to the Woman's Club.

## Fund-Raising Events

The diversity of events sponsored by the Lake Barcroft Woman's Club is a true testament to club members' creativity and versatility. Over the years, the events included dances, stage shows, tours, sales of various popular items, and book projects, to name but a few. And the proceeds—which were substantial—were donated to charitable causes.

A Valentine's Day Dance held at a downtown Washington, D.C., hotel was one of the club's first fund-raisers, and, at a cost of \$16 per couple, it proved to be a huge success. In 1955, a bridge luncheon that cost \$1.55, for which the participants paid \$2.25, enhanced the Woman's Club's coffers considerably. The club sponsored theme dances to raise money, and one of the first, a West of the Pecos Dance, had cowboys and Indians dancing together, as good neighbors do. Participants dressed in Polynesian costumes for a South Sea Island Dance. In 1961, the fifth annual Benefit Ball, called the Suppressed Desire

Dance, was held at St. Anthony's Hall and drew two hundred partygoers in all manner of outfits. Prizewinners included Helen O'Rourke, dressed as a poodle, and Lewis Slack, who came as a baby dressed in nightclothes and carrying his baby bed mattress. Jean Stephens smudged her face and sewed money to her dress, representing her desire to be filthy rich.

On April 17, 1966, the Woman's Club held the first of many house and garden tours. Considerable advertising preceded the event, including a presentation on WRC-TV by LBWC's president, Delores Friedburger, who showed photographs of the lake as well as the homes that would be open for the tour. Other Woman's Club members in the television audience showed off their Easter bonnets. The *Washington Post* and the *Washington Star* ran articles about the upcoming tour, complete with pictures of the home of Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell Phelps—who owned and operated the Congressional School on Sleepy Hollow Road—at 6319 Cavalier Corridor. As an added attraction, Jeane Dixon, a noted author and psychic, served as a guest hostess at one of the homes on the tour, where she autographed copies of her best-selling book, *A Gift of Prophecy*.

A second house tour held the following year featured a tea at the home of Therese St. Hilaire to honor twenty wives of public officials living in Lake Barcroft. Many of these women were active in Lake Barcroft community affairs. Their husbands included Ramsey Clark, then attorney general of the United States; Warren Christopher, deputy attorney general and later secretary of state in the first Clinton administration; Robert Komer, ambassador-at-large; John Foster, director of research and development at the Department of Defense; and twelve congressmen: Charles Bennett of Florida, Robert Dole of Kansas (later Senate majority leader), Wayne Hayes of Ohio, Melvin Price of Illinois (the powerful chairman of the House Armed Services Committee), and Charles Vanik of Ohio.

Several stage shows that were written, directed and performed by residents raised money for LBWC charities. The first production, *Global Glamour*, was staged in 1962. It was followed the next year by *This Is My Country*, which featured songs from various eras, starting with pre-Civil War days in the Old South, and progressing to the Gay Nineties, vaudeville, the Roaring Twenties, World War II, jazz and finally folk music, hootenanny-style. The 1964 production, *Tickets Please*, used New York and Broadway as themes for a lively musical sparked by Herb Davis, a popular radio and television personality at that time.

Over the years, other fund-raising projects were undertaken to add money to the club's treasury. Members contributed favorite recipes to a popular Lake Barcroft cookbook, *Barcroft Fare with a Flair*. At the height of the jogging craze, the club sold long-sleeved royal blue sweatshirts emblazoned with "Lake Barcroft Jogger" in white on the back. A Vietnamese orphan named Le Thi Hiu was the focus of another fund-raising

project: 50 percent of the proceeds from the sale of Lake Barcroft Christmas cards were donated to help support the 12-year-old girl.

While the Woman's Club receives credit for all the good works in which members were involved, it should be noted that their husbands deserve some recognition as well. Aside from babysitting duties when their wives were occupied with charitable causes, the men generally supported the fund-raising events and parties by providing the manual labor that always seemed to be needed. The men also performed in various shows. On one hilarious occasion, for example, after three weeks of intensive rehearsals, Bill Batrus, George Bates, Barney O'Rourke and others performed a vigorous cancan as part of *Global Glamour*, an LBWC-sponsored show presented at the Congressional School. It was a real tour de force, and the sight of eight gentlemen high-kicking their hairy legs brought the house down, and deservedly so.

On the occasion of the club's fortieth anniversary in 1995, an article in the *Lake Barcroft Newsletter* noted that the club had donated \$100,000 to charitable causes during its forty-year existence. That figure seems low. Available records show that the Woman's Club made contributions totaling \$75,000 during the eleven years between 1990 and 2000. That sum includes only the annual contributions to three major charities; it excludes many other donations that were made over the years. Given the difficulty of raising funds through the good will of donors and by the hard work of club members, the women generated a substantial amount of money for their causes.

## The Footbridge

In 1976, the members met at the George Mason Library to decide how to spend \$10,500 in surplus funds. There were two proposals: constructing a footbridge over Holmes Run or making a donation to BARLAMA to reduce the outstanding debt on the lake purchase. The outcome of the vote was anything but a *fait accompli*. There was some opposition to the bridge among Woman's Club members. Chica Brunsvold, the club's president at the time, knew that the debt would be paid off eventually and,

with the backing of popular member Mike Miller, she pushed hard for approval of the bridge. After some discussion, a vote was taken and the footbridge won. The arguments for the bridge centered on joining the South and Middle Areas of the community, thereby shortening the distance for children walking to nearby schools and for residents visiting one another. Before the bridge was installed, some children would wade across the stream or hop across a small waterfall, both dangerous shortcuts.

The initial concept for a link between the two areas involved some kind of floating pontoon bridge, which would also incorporate a debris trap. Another possibility was a cable-drawn, do-it-yourself pedestrian ferry. In any case, the idea raised concerns among neighbors near the proposed site. The opposition cited three drawbacks: (1) intrusion by outsiders, especially on motorcycles, (2) the community's liability and (3) long-term costs. A question about the future use of the property on Dearborn Drive, adjacent to the bridge site, was also raised.

LBWC president, Chica Brunsvold, and Margaret Finley, chairperson of the Community Improvement Committee, made presentations to the LABARCA board in which they stressed the benefits of having a bridge and promised that intrusion would be controlled. Still, the board was unwilling to support the idea; the association's members had already voted down several proposed community projects, and the board did not want to add to its rejection rate. To resolve the matter, the Woman's Club conducted a door-to-door referendum, resulting in 836 households in favor and 168 either opposed, noncommittal or unavailable. In the end, the residents most



Margaret Finley, Board of Supervisors Chairman Jack Herrity, Mason District Supervisor Alan Magazine, Chica Brunsvold, Mike Miller, Naomi Zeavin.

affected by the proposed footbridge dropped their opposition in the interest of community goodwill. To quote Joan Doupe, "I think the smartest thing we did was avoid a full-scale debate at LABARCA and BARLAMA membership meetings. Going door-to-door and explaining it one-on-one was a lot of work, but that's what made the difference."

Because the bridge site was a county right-of-way, the Woman's Club had to get permission from Fairfax County to build the bridge. As part of the justification for the waiver, the club offered the bridge as a gift to the county upon completion. The club also promised to landscape the areas around the footbridge thereby screening it from view. Margaret Finley was the head of the project, and Stuart Finley served as an adviser to the Woman's Club. Stuart's knowledge of the county system helped to get the project approved, and he provided guidance in contracting the job with Coastal Design and Construction, Inc.

On June 1, 1977, Naomi Zeavin and Jeanne Fellows, president and past president, respectively, of LBWC signed the \$10,000 contract for construction of the bridge. The completed bridge was dedicated at a ceremony on December 17, 1977. Past presidents Chica Brunsbold, escorted by Jack Herrity, chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, and Mike Miller, escorted by Mason District Supervisor Alan Magazine, cut ribbons at each end of the span. They met in the middle and shook hands, to signal that the footbridge was officially open.

Chica Brunsbold considers the footbridge to be the Woman's Club's most successful and longest lasting accomplishment. Certainly, the footbridge is the most visible Woman's Club contribution to the community, and the members view it as "a literal metaphor for the club's years of building bridges to bring its residents closer together in many ways."

## **The Community Garden**

To commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the Woman's Club, members requested and received permission to create the Woman's Club Community Garden on WID-owned land near the footbridge. The brainchild of Dorothy Werner, then LBWC president, the concept was supported enthusiastically by a long list of Woman's Club officials, volunteers and community leaders, who then worked cooperatively to make the dream a reality. To get the garden off to a successful start, the club drew up a budget and allocated funds for a portion of the landscaping and plants for the first three years. WID provided the land and valuable logistical support; and the Beautification and Improvements Committee of the Lake Barcroft Association assumed responsibility for the actual design, installation, planting and maintenance of the garden. Additional funds for the garden now generally come from donations honoring the memories of loved ones.

The garden is a peaceful and beautiful place to enjoy nature. The site features a delightful garden, a wetlands trail, benches and a dock—all arranged around a tiered series of small ponds that are connected by three spillways and fed by a sparkling five-foot-tall waterfall. Many of the rocks used in the ponds were retrieved from the bottom of the lake during frequent dredging operations. The garden, which took five years to complete, is primarily the work of Ernie Rauth, one of the original residents, longtime member of the association's Architectural Review Committee and chairperson of the Improvements Committee. The dedication ceremony, held on May 1, 2000, commemorated Ernie's many valuable contributions to the garden with a plaque inscribed "Ernie Rauth Waterfall." At Lake Barcroft's Fiftieth Anniversary Party in November 2000, Ernie received an additional award for his forty-nine years of service to the community. In his honor, the path between Lakeview Drive and Dearborn Drive—which goes over the footbridge and through the garden—has been named Rauth Lane.

## **The Legacy**

The Woman's Club is nonpartisan, nonpolitical and nonprofit. One would be hard-pressed to find a similar organization that has done so much for its community. In 1964, Helen O'Rourke, as director of Woman's activities for Project Hope, traveled extensively to communicate with 150,000 junior clubwomen across the United States who supported Project Hope as their cause. On one trip, a Jacksonville, Florida newspaper quoted her as saying: "There are so many easy jokes about the clubwoman-type, but nobody really knows how much that enormous volunteer corps of workers does for the country, both for charity and civic-work. Why, sometimes I hate to think what would happen to most every cultural and charitable project all over the nation if these women suddenly decided to give it all up."

These sentiments are just as appropriate in 2000 as they were in 1964, and perhaps even more so, given the federal government's greater dependence on charities to support the needy in America. In these changing times, it may become increasingly difficult to maintain a strong membership that is dedicated to the mission of the Lake Barcroft Woman's Club. Five years ago, Norma Cockrell expressed some perspective on to the ideals of the club: "Never to rest on its laurels, the Club will continue to look for new ways it can improve life in our community and surroundings and help those worthy causes that are discovered along the way. Many happy memories, lasting friendships and fun-filled hours have accompanied this pursuit in the past. It is resolved not to look upon it as past history but as a promise of the productive and good times ahead."

# Conclusion

**A**s stated at the outset, this booklet is a compendium of twelve articles written to serve as a partial chronicle of the first fifty years of Lake Barcroft history. It outlines the turbulent first twenty-five years of the community's existence; a time of challenges ranging from the effects of a devastating hurricane to debates over where the community should be going. Through the first twenty-five years of Lake Barcroft most of the changes came about by virtue of the hard work and thoughtful decisions of many first generation volunteers. Their traditions, built over time, have survived in such annual events as the Fourth of July Fireworks, Easter Egg Hunt and Halloween Parade.

This history also covers the major aspects of Lake Barcroft over the second twenty-five years, but there are simply too many individuals for me to name everyone who contributed to the community in so many ways. Clubs, celebrations, parades, charities, parties, sports activities and neighborhood watches continue, thanks to the vigorous efforts of involved residents. New ideas from the second generation have evolved into sustained projects, including, but not limited to, the Lake Barcroft Foundation, Geesepeace, Friends of the Lake, the Community Garden and the Lake Barcroft computer-based website and listserve, Lake Link

What of the next 25 years, the next 50 years? Will there be challenges? Of Course! The nature of those challenges is difficult to predict; they will surely arise and test the commitment of this unique community. The Lake Barcroft Association, the Woman's Club and the Watershed Improvement District serve as the foundation for meeting our commitments to service the overall needs of the Northern Virginia area as well as maintaining Lake Barcroft in the mold cast by our predecessors.

The various clubs may have decreased in number since the first generation, but times change, as do people's attitudes. Like other successful communities, the second generation carried on the traditions of the early settlers' inspiring legacy. All in all, the essence of the past continues today and will into the future as new residents contribute their talents. The future of Lake Barcroft will depend on the next generation-the third-generation of Barcrofters-to reach back to previous generations, grab the baton, move forward and perpetuate Colonel Barger's description of Lake Barcroft as "like being in heaven...a glorious spot."

*L. Anthony Bracken*



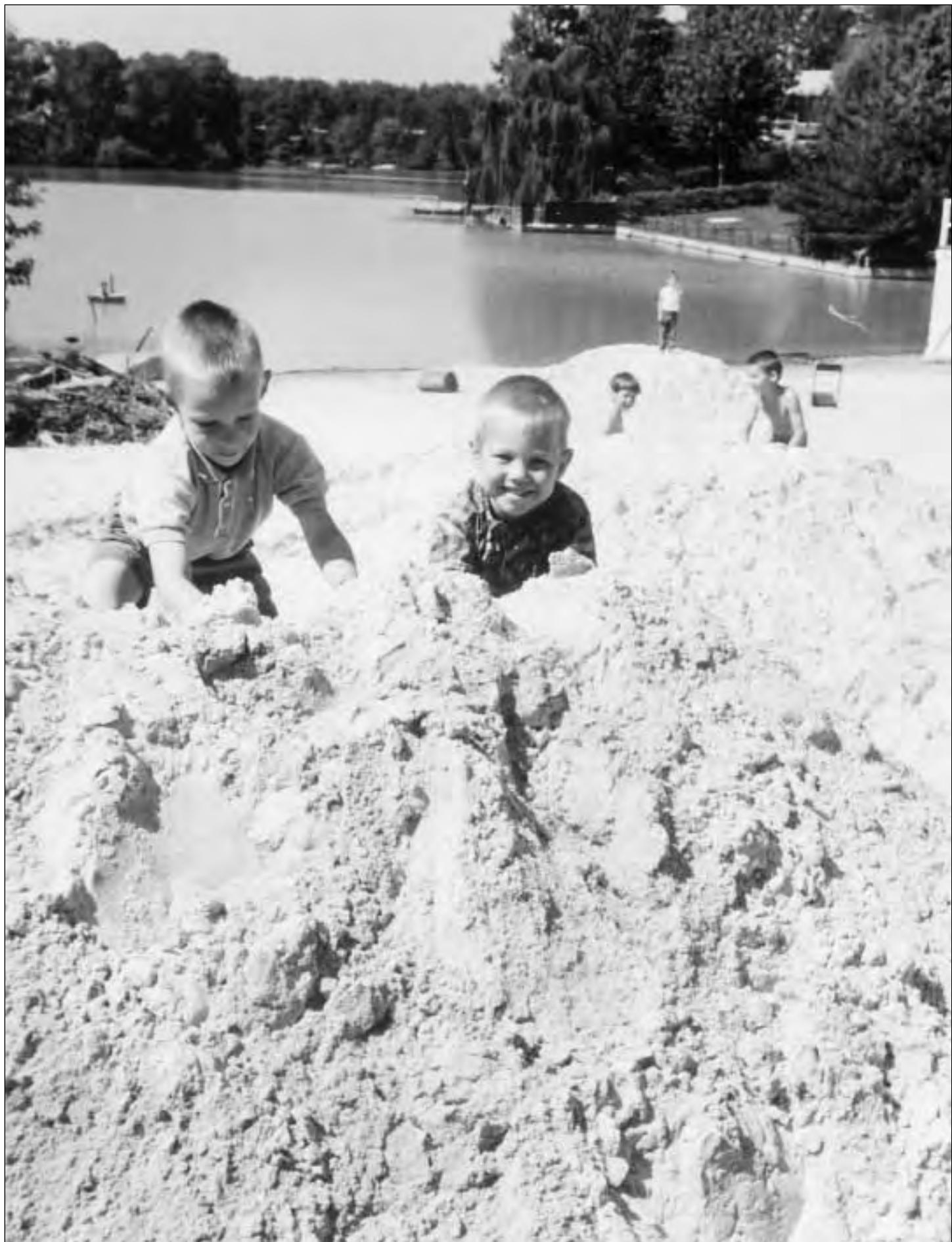


January 10, 1964









Penny Pile (May, 1964)



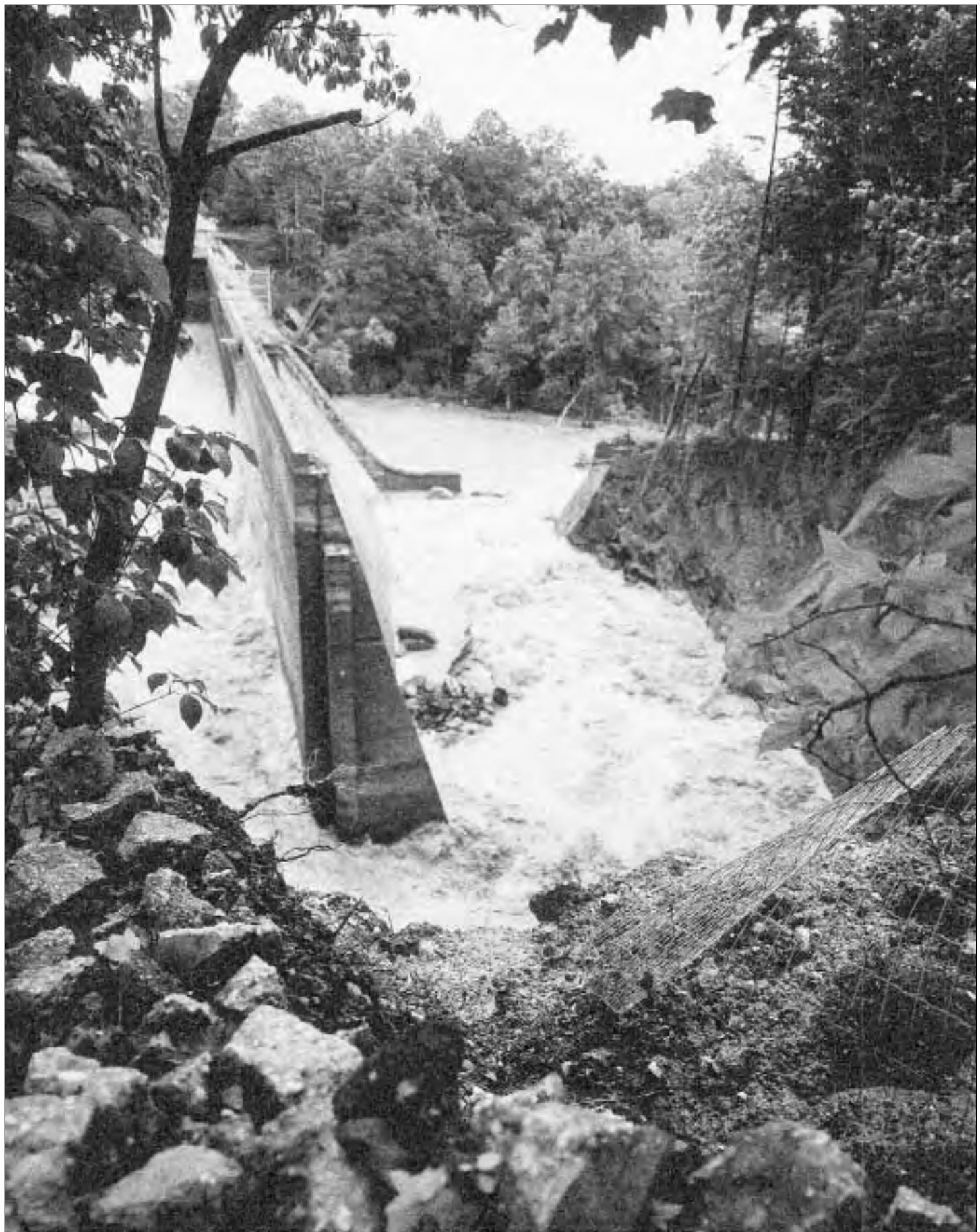




August, 1964











*November, 1963*



August 1, 1964



Ernie Rauth at the Community Garden.





January, 1966

















August 15, 1965





May, 1964



*September, 1963*

# Photo Identification



Antiquarian readers are invited to mail the names and other data of unidentified Barcrofters illustrated in this book to:

**Lake Barcroft History, c/o WID, 3650 Boat Dock Drive,  
Falls Church, Virginia 22041.**

Eventually, when enough responses are received, an article in the *Lake Barcroft Newsletter* will identify and update the contemporary whereabouts of earlier Barcrofters.

## Examples

The tyro scuba diver being instructed by Sherman Vandevender, shown in the picture above, is **Robert Finley** who recently celebrated his 50th birthday and lives with his family near JEB Stuart High School. His brother **Frank**, who is shown operating the dragline on the opposite page during the 1961 lake dredging, is currently a licensed aviation mechanic and lives in the Reston area.

The tall gentleman talking to a little girl on page 75 on the earlier steps to Beach 2 is **Frank Major**, who was President of LABARCA from 1964 and 1965. Frank's grandson **Kevin Hardy** is Lake Barcroft's Water Safety Supervisor. **Bob Hardy** also served in that position.

The second man from the left in the picture on page 44 is the distinguished conservationist **Lloyd Swift**, who died in 2001 at age 96. Lloyd was a wildlife specialist with USDA for decades. Lloyd was famous for his smoked carp. He was mildly disappointed when no one picked up on his suggestion of introducing River Otter to Lake Barcroft. The island at Holmes Run was named in his honor.

On page 28, **Carrington Williams** was a member of the Virginia House of Delegates during the crucial period when WID was being established. He prevailed on the Virginia General Assembly to revise the WID law so that it would work

in Lake Barcroft's case. Carrington now lives on Half Moon Circle in the Middle Area and spends more time and energy preserving Civil War battlegrounds than practicing law.

On page 29, **Myron Birnbaum** was more than a lyricist. He was Editor of the *Lake Barcroft Newsletter* for 13 years putting out 152 issues ending in November 1983. He was President of the Lake Barcroft Association in 1968 and 1969. A graduate of Stanford Law School, Myron served with the Judge Advocate General's Office of the U. S. Air Force. He died on February 17th, 1984.

On page 70, **Ernie Rauth**, Chairman of LBA's Improvements Committee, created the Community Garden at the Woman's Club Bridge and improved the beaches and traffic circles with creative landscaping. Ernie is one of Barcroft's original residents and was Col. Barger's Community Architect.



# Community Leaders



## Lake Barcroft Woman's Club Presidents

1955-56	Elsie Kolm	1970-71	Therese St. Hilaire	1985-86	Nancy Stauch
1956-57	Sylvia Cazan	1971-72	Virginia Arnold	1986-87	Louise Juergens
1957-58	Jean Stephens	1972-73	Peggy Johnson	1987-88	Tina Trapnell
1958-59	Mildred Fazar	1973-74	Helen Richmond	1988-89	Anne Walker
1959-60	Esther Patridge	1974-75	Mike Miller	1989-90	Kas Johnston
1960-61	Helen O'Rourke	1975-76	Chica Brunsvold	1990-91	Edith Bairdain
1961-62	Beatrice Carland	1976-77	Jeanne Fellows	1991-92	Kay Ward-Johnson
1962-63	Mildred Fazar	1977-78	Naomi Zeavin	1992-93	Mary Hughes
1963-64	Esther Jerome	1978-79	Kay Gerber	1993-94	Weezie Chappell
1964-65	Churchill Ruegg	1979-80	Lois Kaye	1994-95	Elena Borges
1965-66	Dolorous Freiburger	1980-81	Jean Meyer	1995-96	Dorothy Werner
1966-67	Adelaide McGurr	1981-82	Sandy Augliere	1996-97	Julia Treagy
1967-68	Louise Heid	1982-83	Lolita Acuna	1997-99	Jean Meyer
1968-69	Dorothy Berger	1983-84	Rose Swift	1999-00	Weezie Chappell
1969-70	Josephine Cox	1984-85	Marcelle Cahill	2000-01	Nan Brent



*Photo Carl Lambert*

## LABARCA Presidents

Ellen Oshins	1953-54	James Cobb	1974-75
Don Birrell	1955-56	Jack Fasteau	1976-77
Anson Hyde	1957-58	John Meskimen	1978-79
Carl Johnson	1958-59	Caroline Jones	1980-81
Stuart Finley	1960-61	Strode Brent	1981-82
Rex Lauck	1962-63	George Erikson	1982-83
Frank Major	1964-65	Tina Trapnell	1984-85
Chris Murphy	1966-67	Ron Oxley	1986-87
Myron Birnbaum	1968-69	Sam Rothman	1988-90
Philip Johnson	1970-71	Trippi Penland	1991-92
George Overby	1972-73		



August, 1964

## Barlama-BBI Presidents

1970-71	Fritz Trakowski	1980-81	Sam Rothman
1971-72	William Arnold	1981-83	Ky Faulkner
1972-73	John Haughey	1984-85	Edward G. Miller
1973-74	Dave Alne	1985-87	Jerry Meyer
1974-75	Nancy Shands	1987-88	Larry Nixon
1975-76	Sandy Augliere	1988-89	Pat Divito
1976-77	Ron Greene	1990-91	Strode Brent
1978-79	Frank Sanger	1991-92	T. J. Gauthier



## LBA Past Presidents

1992-94 T. J. Gauthier  
1994-96 Jim Kilbourne  
1996-98 David Goslin  
1998-00 George Waters  
2000-02 David Feld

Christine Lawson - Lake Manager

## LBA Year 2000 Directors

David Feld - President  
George Waters - Vice President  
Ralph Smalley - Secretary  
Karol Forsberg - Treasurer  
Frank Aukofer - Membership  
Nan Brent - Architectural Review  
Peter Browne - Environmental Quality  
Mac Canter - Legal  
Bob Foster - Water Safety/Beach  
Garrett Green - Director  
George McLennan - Security  
Sue Nixon - Special Events  
Therese St. Hilaire - Publications



## WID Trustees

Dave Alne, *Chairman*

Tony Bracken, *Treasurer*

Sammie Guy, *Secretary*

1972-77 Sara Ann Determan  
1972-74 Edwin Deagle  
1972-74 Dick Anderson  
1974-76 John Haughey  
1974-78 Dave Stahl  
1976-85 Jack Keith  
1977-on Dave Alne  
1978-86 Dick Werling  
1986-94 Freeman Williams  
1986-01 Fred Chanania  
1994-96 Charles Cooper  
2001-on Sammie Guy  
2001-on Anthony Bracken

## WID Associates

*Current*

Walter Cate  
Wendy Cline  
Charles Cooper  
Alan Hudson  
Gary Jewell  
Jack Keith  
Ernie Rauth  
Peter Silvia  
Richard Werling

*Past*

Strode Brent  
Ki Faulkner  
T. J. Gauthier  
Lloyd Swift

## WID Staff

*Current*

Stuart Finley  
Sam Ellis  
Ken Kopka  
Davis Grant

*Past*

Robert Morris  
Kelly Wilson  
Paul Gordon



*Photo by Harry Nalchayan, Washington Post*

# Into the 21st Century

**A**s this *Lake Barcroft History* goes to press, momentary events presage a fruitful future for the Lake Barcroft Community. WID's Dave Alne and Stu Finley are seen here *burning the bond*, with LBA President Dave Feld presiding, as over a hundred Barcrofters celebrate on the Beach 5 Peninsula the end of 27 years of municipal bond debt service. Hereafter, 100% of WID taxes will be available to finance future improvements.

Other noteworthy events are underway:

- WID's six-year EPA 319 Grant, which has committed \$800,000 to identifying and demonstrating stormwater management *Best Management Practices*, is winding up as WID staff and engineering consultants prepare a Final Report to disseminate innovative conservation practices to other communities in America.
- WID has published a 72-page book *Watershed and Lake BMPs* which is now being augmented by additional technical data in the EPA 319 Grant Final Report.
- WID's new *Diversion Debris Trap* is about to be built as part of a million dollar *Virginia Department of Transportation* bridge construction project to replace the worn-out Potterton Causeway.

- A \$200,000 federal *Housing and Urban Department* grant initiated by Congressman Tom Davis will fund the diversion debris trap design and construction.
- A *Holmes Run Watershed Plan* is about to be developed as part of a Fairfax County *Department of Public Works and Environmental Services* project to form the basis for ambitious new stormwater management concepts such as *Comprehensive Urban Watershed Retrofit*.
- Federal, Virginia, Potomac, Chesapeake Bay agencies clean water programs are beginning to merge and materialize with the help of jurisdictions such as the Lake Barcroft Community.
- Meantime, Lake Barcroft Community property owners have made property improvements thus augmenting official aggregate assessed Barcroft valuation to over \$400,000,000.

*Burning the bond* was only a symbolic gesture, but future years promise a stronger community effort, a better lake and new challenges ahead.

*Stuart Finley*



June 24, 2001  
Photo by Sally Alne



ISBN 0-615-11978-6

52000>

9 780615 119786

