

Bethlehem Moment 10: Gertrude Fox, Committed Environmentalist

The Bethlehem Gadfly Bethlehem Moments, Fun Stuff July 3, 2019

(Latest in a series of posts on Bethlehem Moments)

Bethlehem Moment 10

City Council

July 2, 2019

Lynn Rothman, 870 Wafford Ln

Video of July 2 City Council meeting [at min. 3:50](#).

Bethlehem Moment: March 22, 1965

While walking along Jacksonville Road, Arthur Fox, aged 15, was struck and killed by a motorist. His mother, Gertrude “Gertie” Fox pressed for a walking path and traffic controls — both of which remain today. Yet this was just the beginning of her environmental and political activism. As Gertrude Fox stated in an interview, “I have two big projects: saving parkland and preserving our water resources.”

Graduating high school in 1934, where she excelled in mathematics, Gertrude was denied admittance to MIT because she was a woman. She received a degree from Simmons College in Boston where she studied science and engineering, holding four jobs to pay her way. There she realized that water “was where our next big shortage was going to be. It

won't be oil, and it won't be jobs. It's going to be worse than that, losing our water resources."

Two years later Gertrude and her husband moved to Bethlehem. She worked as a mathematics instructor in a number of Lehigh Valley schools and as an industrial biologist and metallurgical inspector for Bethlehem Steel, a male-dominated field, from 1945-1947.

In addition (perhaps more importantly!), she was an advocate for the protection of our precious waterways, particularly the Monocacy Creek.

Gertrude Fox had the knowledge and ability to convince developers and property owners to adopt construction practices that would minimize adverse impacts on water quality. She studied plans for proposed developments and then recommended changes to state and local governments, as well as to developers and landowners, to protect the environment.

Gertrude Fox was president of the Monocacy Creek Watershed Association, which is still active today.

In the mid-1980s, she led a group that petitioned to purchase the last remaining tract, 6.5 acres, of the original 500-acre Burnside Farm. Their goal was to save and preserve the heart of this 18th century Moravian farm in Bethlehem City, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1987 the Northampton County Council named a four-acre tract along the Monocacy Creek near the intersection of Routes 22 and 512 the "Gertrude Fox Conservation Area." Three years later, President George H.W. Bush presented her with the first Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Award.

On January 4, 1995, Gertrude Fox, an educator, ecologist, engineer and avid skier died. Her foresight as to the importance of preserving our natural resources has proven correct, and her legacy is still with us today.

“Struck by Auto, Boy Loses Life,” *Morning Call*, March 23, 1965, p. 5.

“Gertrude Fox ‘Mrs. Monocacy,’ Is Dead at 78 She was educator, politician, environmentalist, engineer,” *Morning Call* <<https://www.mcall.com/news/mc-xpm-1995-01-05-3027547-story.html>> January 5, 1995. Accessed June 24, 2019.

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