

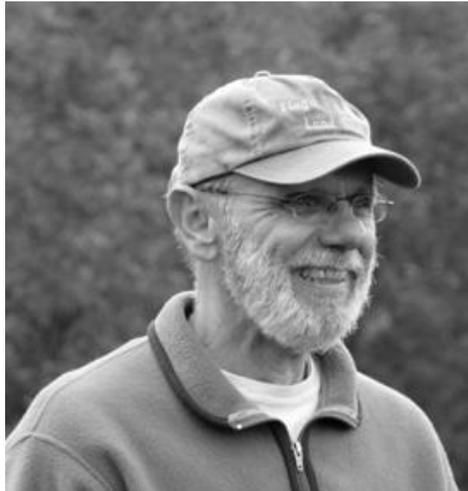
It is great fun for conspirators to surprise a deserving person with a big award, especially if he wouldn't ever have suspected we all felt that way about his contributions. Tom Reimers was at least that flabbergasted when it was announced at the spring FLTC meeting that he was the recipient of only our third ever "Howard Beye Lifetime Distinguished Service Award." Previous honorees were Ed Sidote and Howard Beye, so it's for a rarified bunch of those who just "keep ticking" that the Board of Managers reserves this award.

Tom is basically a quiet, reserved soul afflicted with a hyperactive social and environmental conscience, which has poked him into undertaking many a large responsibility in order to advance projects he is passionate about. So the man who may have preferred to be a hermit has spent a lot of time in fairly public roles, out of a strong sense of duty and responsibility.

While his working career was spent as a professor in the Vet College at Cornell, he has undertaken more other "jobs" than most ever would. For instance, he was President of the Board of the North Country Trail Association 1987-90, overlapping his Presidency of the FLTC from 1989-92, a seeming overload that has never been repeated. None of us has ever enjoyed a crisper board meeting, kept strictly to agenda, and sometimes even ending early!

Ever since then, he has held FLTC Board seats, various Cayuga Trail Club officer positions, and has been a faithful trail maintainer since 1985, even shouldering the Cayuga Trail Chair job for a while. Probably the most visible job he undertook for the FLTC, affecting a thousand people four times a year, was his 10-year editorship of the *FLT News*. Tom took what had been a typed and copied several-page newsletter and turned it into an attractive ambassador for our trail. Back when personal computers were just beginning to become more common at home, Tom took classes to learn desktop publishing. The results were the cream paper editions we looked forward to from 1992-02, with

Honoring Tom Reimers by Irene Szabo



Courtesy of the Finger Lakes Land Trust

good B&W picture reproduction, and color highlights.

The better the *News* got, the more people wanted to send in articles, so it slowly grew in size during that time. In your hands today is the next generation result of the major improvements begun by Tom, now a magazine often reaching 40 pages, with so many eager contributors that current editor Jo Taylor sometimes has to set articles aside for the future, a great measure of its importance to readers.

Less visible are some of the other big projects he dutifully undertook in the background. For instance, he wrote a history of the trail for our 30th anniversary in 1992, updated it for the 40th, and created a thorough Bed & Breakfast Guide that the FLTC sold for some years. Many major weekend events were organized by Tom, including the first time we hosted the North Country Trail annual meeting in 1995 at Watson Homestead in Steuben County. He put together our first slide show with script to help speakers make presentations all over the state, and was even brave enough to be our first webmaster! In other words, Tom has been a faithful volunteer for so long that some of his projects happened before many of you had even discovered the trail.

Meanwhile he has volunteered for many significant roles with the Finger Lakes Land Trust, often working on the laborious details of protecting lands in his typical steady, methodical, thorough way. That's one of the special things about Tom: if he undertakes it, we know it will be well done and on time! Gary Mallow, current Cayuga Trails Club trail chair, appreciates Tom's willingness to help him learn the ropes, including pitching in to work on thorny (indeed!) problem areas along their part of the trail. Gary complimented Tom's "low key way of making a difference."

Naturally he was given the Wally Wood Award back in 1998, and the occasion was memorable for many reasons, not the least of which was his typical bratty sense of humor. He couldn't resist making a petite flap out of the fact that I made the presentation to him while wearing a skirt. But I remember when he suffered his own sartorial frustrations: in 1990 as FLTC President he presented the Wally Wood to the late Ed Willis at our Saturday banquet in Bainbridge. Because Ed always was formal in tie, jacket, and fedora, Tom wore an unaccustomed suit himself. So naturally Ed Willis wore some old sweater that day and Tom looked like a kid from Nebraska just off the bus.

And he is, of course, a boy from Nebraska who got a job at Cornell, sold his bike within a week of seeing Ithaca's hills, then never left. One of his traits that I'll always remember isn't one that got him this stellar and rare award, but it reflects the man, and that is his tenderness and clear affection shown to many of the older members of his hiking club. Tom Reimers isn't a bit shy about showing sweetness and solicitation toward others. Of course, within this same complex elf lurks the same guy who used to send photograph postcards of pictures he'd captured of me in especially stupid positions, something I'm certain the Mt. Morris Post Office staff remembers him for, too. □