



Educational Farm & Nature Preserve

Legacy Series

An ongoing series of articles recounting the history of the Stratford Ecological Center and the Warner family

Legacy Series: Part 10 November, 2011

Continuing with the story of Gale Warner



Gale Warner

Gale's marriage and Stratford beginnings....



Gale and David Kreger were married in 1987, and continued their efforts to end the Cold War by organizing a series of cooperative initiatives between American and Soviet citizens. In order to write a report on a Soviet grassroots effort to stop nuclear testing, Gale managed to slip through Soviet checkpoints in 1989 to visit a “hot” nuclear underground test site in Kazakhstan. Also in 1989, she and David, along with their Soviet friends, founded an international organization called “Golubka” (meaning “dove” in Russian) to educate people across the Soviet Union on strategies and tools of nonviolence, social and personal empowerment, ecological balance, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. During this time, Gale wrote her second book, entitled *The Invisible Threads: Independent Soviets Working for Global Awareness and Social Transformation*, published in 1991.

Whenever Gale would return home to Ohio, a trip to the Delaware farm was scheduled – to enjoy the natural treasures of the forest and wetlands. With Gale's outline in hand for how to create the Educational Center, her parents, Drs. Louise and Jack Warner, began exploring the feasibility of the project and visited other environmental education/nature centers in Ohio to see how they were structured and operated. Aullwood Audubon Farm and Nature Center near Dayton was the organization most similar to Hidden Villa; its staff was quite helpful. Stark Wilderness Center and Brukner Nature Center were also visited. To cheer on the efforts, an informal “advisory group” materialized, drawing on the Sustainable Agriculture program at Ohio State University (OSU) and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC) in Wooster.



Because of the spectacular display of wild flowers in the Delaware woods – especially the wild hyacinths – the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) proposed placing a conservation easement on 95 acres of the forest and buttonbush swamps, to be designated the “Stratford Woods State Nature Preserve.” Legal advice on obtaining 501(c)(3) status was generously given by attorney Bill Ellis, who, with his wife Jane Ann, had already formed a non-profit organization to protect spectacular land they owned in Hocking County (Crane Hollow).

During Gale's visit to Ohio in August 1990, the Stratford “advisory group” met at her parents' home. Coming along for the ride was a young man seeking a Doctoral Degree with OSU's Sustainable Agriculture program. Jeff Dickinson had been the farmer with a non-profit group in Arkansas (the “Meadowcreek Project”); Gale was most impressed with his accomplishments, and advised her parents to involve him in Stratford, if at all possible. They did.