



*A Memorial Supplement
To Issue #101, May/June 2003
In Honor Of
Norma L. Flannery*

WETLAND *matters*

Published bi-monthly for the Friends and Members of Oxbow, Inc.



Norma L. Flannery

Born: February 21, 1922

Died: April 1, 2003

A many faceted personality.

A keen mind.

A dry wit.

A lover of nature.

A writer of poetry.

A patron of the opera.

One of a kind.

A tireless worker.

A skilled negotiator.

A humble individual.

A generous giver.

An example of courage.

Norma L. Flannery was a woman of character. She led Oxbow, Inc. for 13 of its 17 years with boundless energy and utmost integrity. Under her leadership, almost 1,000 acres were set aside for wildlife in her special wetlands. As a business office supervisor at the Bell Telephone Company, she negotiated with employees and customers and became an expert in that art. She was co-owner of the Kiddie Ranch Day Nursery, a licensed day care facility in Dent, for 13 years --a position which changed her life. While the little ones napped, she used to say, she looked out the windows "and discovered birds." That led to a position on Audubon of Ohio Board of Directors and eventually to Oxbow, Inc. She searched out birds as far away as the Amazon and Antarctica. She was proud, as she should have been, of the award she received in 2001 in Washington, D.C.-- The Environmental Law Institute National Award, Volunteer Leadership Category.

A graduate of Western Hills High School, she excelled in swimming and field hockey, and, a given, academics. She enjoyed writing essays and poetry. She loved opera. As a young woman, she rescued a young, mentally handicapped boy from drowning in an icy pond after bullies had taunted him to ride his bicycle on the ice.

Norma was laid to rest April 9 at Spring Grove Cemetery. Services were held in the Norman Chapel. Norma's dear friend, Do Kuhlman, carried out the funeral arrangements which Norma had made. Another friend, Fr. Frank Pretto came from Santa Fe, New Mexico, led the prayers and played the organ, a piece Norma had instructed him to learn and play at her funeral. (She had sent him the sheet music.) He closed the prayer session with John 14:

Do not let your hearts be troubled.

You trust in God, trust also in me.

In my Father's house there are many dwelling places.....

In all truth I tell you,

Whoever believes in me

will perform the same works as I do myself,

And will perform even greater works,

Because I am going to the Father.

Norma Flannery touched many lives. She was a leader par excellence. To many, she was Oxbow, Inc.

The following are special memories from her birder friends and Oxbow, Inc. regulars.



The first time I had direct contact with Norma was while I was a member of the Hamilton County Environmental Priorities Project task force. I called Norma seeking some research documents on the Oxbow as resource material for the HCEPP. Rather than try to describe to me how to get to her house on the near west side she asked to meet me at the entrance to Spring Grove Cemetery. She always had an unconventional way to solve a problem.

What I really remember from Norma is what she taught me. I had been schooled in people management in my job but Norma was a school unto herself. She was focused on the end point: obtain the Oxbow land and protect it. She had many times shown significant innovation in negotiating for land purchases. She also had her line in the sand that told her she had gone as far as she was going to go. The complement to this tough negotiation approach was patience. If a particular negotiation did not turn out --have patience -- wait a few years and try again. People change, circumstances change, needs change. With patience you can win when the toughest negotiations fail.

I will miss her greatly but do my best to extend her dream and that of the other founders.

Jon Seymour, Ph. D., President

As the youngest Board member and an attorney, I served as the subject of Norma's good-natured humor at most Board meetings. Norma always made me feel at home. She was that way.

My most vivid memory of Norma occurred the evening of June 28, 2001, in Washington, D.C. Norma was honored that evening with the 2001 Volunteer Leadership Award at the National Wetlands Awards sponsored by the Environmental Law Institute. I attended the award presentation at a Senate Office Building and a dinner honoring Norma afterwards. I will always remember Norma's smile and laughter that evening. I sat next to her during the dinner and it was a very special time. I will miss her.

***Dwight Poffenberger, Jr.
Recording Secretary***

This is a beautiful spring day here along the Ohio. Doesn't seem any thing could go wrong but we know Norma is gone and we will miss her.

As I think back over the Oxbow years, I know that Norma was a big part of our success. I think of all the good work she has done. The Oxbow, Inc. phone number was her phone number and there were countless calls to answer. There were letters to write and newsletters to mail out. And there were meetings and more meetings to attend. I'm sure there was even more work she did that I didn't know about.

Norma was a gifted leader. She was skilled at recruiting people for the Board of Directors. She ran a good meeting, got work done and had a good time doing it. Now she has left us in good hands with Jon Seymour as our president.

Morris Mercer, Co-Founder

I met Norma about 18 years ago, or so, when we were serving on the board of Audubon of Ohio. Right away I liked Norma, for her genuine interest in conservation, her love of all creatures, her respect for each of us on the board and especially for her crusty, exuberant sense of humor. When she became President of Oxbow, Inc., she invited me to serve as research director. This job was right up my alley and I enjoyed it.

But one of the things I remember most about Norma was the time she called me at home to ask me to attend a special meeting of Oxbow, Inc. She was surprised to find me at home (as I am usually at school or out doing anything other than housework!) cleaning my windows and curtains!! She asked me if I was lying on the couch eating bon-bons and I finally gave in and told her, "Sure!". From that day on, my new name was "Bon-Bon." In fact, the last time I spoke with her on the phone, she said she was not feeling well but still chuckled as she called me by my nickname!

I shall truly miss Norma. She was a wonderful person, full of life and giving. She has left a valuable legacy by piloting the conservation of the Oxbow area. The world will seem smaller and a bit grayer without her.

***Meg Riestenberg, Ph.D.
Former Board Member***

Norma and Oxbow are each spelled with five letters, but their relationship has so much more meaning than that. Almost from the beginning, Oxbow has prospered under Norma's official and unofficial leadership. Her generous contribution of time and energy and remarkable persistence has helped define Oxbow as a successful organization and conservation entity. Whether by letter, direct contact on Oxbow-desirable land, or chairing a meeting, Norma represented Oxbow at its best. If we learn from her methods and continue by her example, Oxbow should flourish until the rivers run dry.

***Karl H. Maslowski, Former Board Member
Steve Maslowski, Oxbow, Inc. Lecturer***

I first met Norma about nine years ago when I began doing survey work for Oxbow, Inc. From the very beginning it was clear that her priorities were focused on the conservation of our wetland area and that her objectives would be accomplished.

After serving with her on the Oxbow board, my respect for her dedication and pursuit of her goals has grown threefold. Members of Oxbow, Inc. and the public at large owe her a debt of gratitude for all she has accomplished in her all too short time with us. I already miss her.

Mark Esposito, Board Member

I would like to share a passage that portrays my feelings and respect for Norma. I wrote this as part of Norma's nomination for a National Wetlands Award, Volunteer Leadership Category, in 2001.

"Norma was a role model in many ways. She was a role model for the meaning and productivity of a 'retired' woman. She was a role model for the worth and value of a grassroots citizens' organization. Norma was a role model of a negotiator for a local cause --patient but persistent, friendly and firm. Norma was a role model for long-term commitment, a lady who worked daily for over 17 years to pursue a worthy goal. Norma was a role model for citizen stewardship of natural resources -- a voice for wildlife. Norma Flannery was a role model for a life lived with meaning and purpose."

Bonnie Fancher, Former Board Member

Norma Flannery gave the Oxbow top priority in her life. She worked tirelessly on saving this wetland treasure. She had a gift for detail and a real understanding of the area. Her devotion n seeking out

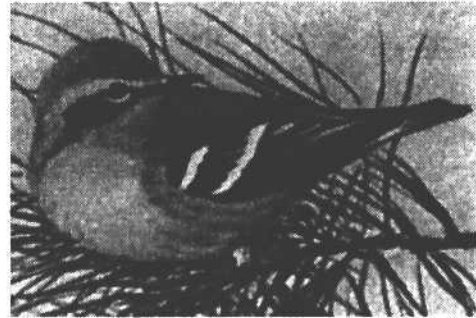


*Norma at work--
at an Oxbow, Inc.
Board meeting.*

Steve Pelikan

acreage to buy was of great benefit to this organization. She will be missed and it will be difficult to replace her. Norma will be looking down on us all and urging us all to get busy and save more land!

**Suzanne Skidmore,
Corresponding Secretary**



I believe I came on the Oxbow Inc. board shortly after Norma became President. At that time we owned no property but we had purchased some conservation easements. I have often thought back to my first impressions of Oxbow Inc. At that time the purchase of the land and later the river boat issue seemed insurmountable. If anyone was up to the task Norma certainly was. Under her leadership so many things just seemed to fall into place.

In 1993 I had a heart attack and open heart surgery. Norma gave my wife a lot of support and solace during my hospital stay. Thanks again, Norma.

Denny Mason, Board Member

I have fond memories of Norma. Her hard work and dedication to wetland conservation were inspiring. Her sense of humor, humility, willingness to compromise, and skills in negotiation made her the perfect person to lead Oxbow, Inc. during its early years.

Denis Conover, Ph. D., Board Member

Norma Flannery was Oxbow, Inc. During her 13 years of presidency, Norma pursued the acquisition of land for Oxbow, Inc. with bulldog tenacity and our organization would not be what it is today were it not for her steadfast devotion to mission. Add to that her wry humor and ability to get people involved and working effectively and you have a strong organization devoted to continuing the work to save the areas that she held so dear and worked so diligently to protect. Norma is sorely missed but she rests with the assurance that her vision is our vision in perpetuity.

Kani Meyer, Vice President

A sharp mind was Norma. Virtually no detail escaped her notice, though she did not major on minor items. She delegated responsibility and worry, and found qualified people to bear them. Norma was an adept negotiator because

she knew character, and was a rock of integrity herself. She loved the outdoors, and proved it every day. Nature will miss her, and so will we.

Mark Westrich, Treasurer

Norma was always one land transaction ahead of the rest of us. Sometimes the ink was literally not dry on one deal before she was busy lining up the next. Most recently, CG&E made a very generous donation of 28 acres to Oxbow, something Norma had been working on for years. But Norma didn't stop there. Never one to be shy, as Norma was being photographed accepting the deed from CG&E, she audaciously reminded the CG&E representatives of some additional acreage she had her eyes on.

Tim Mara, Oxbow, Inc. Attorney

We all knew Norma had a playful side. You couldn't sit through a Board meeting, especially one of the meetings at which she pretended to thwack John Getzendanner with her gavel, without knowing Norma could play, even as she worked relentlessly.

I cherish a vivid mental image of Norma driving into the Zoo parking lot one beautiful spring evening for a board meeting. I watched a blue convertible, top down, come zipping across the lot and pull assertively, and with great precision, into a parking space. I was surprised to see that this self-assured driver was Norma, because I hadn't realized she drove a convertible. I could tell from her expression how much she enjoyed driving with the top down, and I thought, "Wow, this woman has style." I hoped then, as I do still, that I could age with some of the grace and style Norma showed.

Anita Buck, Former Board Member



Norma at play -- on vacation in Santa Fe.

When the preservation of the Oxbow area was merely a figment of our imaginations and discussions were under way of how to accomplish this, I can remember Norma saying, "I want to get involved! I need a project!"

Well, that was what she said, and she did it, and did it well!! Many people have worked hard and long to protect the Oxbow lands but Norma worked harder and longer than any. Thank you, Norma, for a job well done!!!

**Jinny Wiseman Witte,
Former Board Member**

In the 51 years that I have worked, I have met thousands of people, person to person, in my jobs and Norma was probably the most special person outside my family I have ever known. She was most honest and sincere.

I have no idea why she took a liking to me the first time I met her back in about 1987. Norma was not the Oxbow, Inc. president at the time but for some reason was conducting a membership meeting. I asked a lot of questions and after the meeting she came up and said, "You asked a lot of questions tonight others probably wanted to ask but were afraid. Are you always like that?" That was the beginning of our long friendship. Later, I had the honor to nominate Norma for president of the organization.

**John Getzendanner,
Past President**

An important era in Cincinnati natural areas protection has come to an end now that Norma is gone. What an impressive persistence and good humor she had! I always marvel that she knew exactly when she could push and when she had to lay off, and she never forgot to move forward when the time was right.

David Styer, Co-Founder

One of my favorite memories of Norma is my last memory of her, when she conducted the February Oxbow Board meeting. Despite being ill, she presided over the entire board meeting, and her usual endearing gruffness and feistiness, which is generally all in fun anyway, was, amazingly, still present, but in lesser quantities, as much of it had turned to graciousness and appreciation for us at the meeting. Norma may have recognized this was one of her last board meetings, though she did take the post of comptroller after passing her presidential gavel to Jon Seymour.

Or, perhaps she simply wished to convey in a more overt fashion, the grace and appreciation she always had for us. There was somewhat of a shift in her outward demeanor, to more humility and graciousness. I don't think it was the humility that illness forces on a person. As I watched her I felt it was a genuine, intentional shift that Norma was sharing with us in light of the reality that she might not be with us much longer. It was surprising to see this strong woman with a strong voice and strong constitution, uttering her words with half (or less) strength, putting her head down

occasionally, short of breath. It was equally surprising and amazing that, given her health, she conducted a two hour meeting in the proficient, graceful, and fun way that she did. Jeanne Bocklage told me that Norma never complained about her illness, despite the suffering it caused her.

Norma had a gift of what could be called the best of "Westside Cincinnati humor" --a gruff bluntness underlain by affection, an intentionally humorous combativeness that, though it may strike one as rude at times, magnifies the humor and the camaraderie that is its intent--all in fun, intended for the heartening and invigoration of all involved, a gift for humor that points up how we are all human and imperfect and that we might as well laugh at ourselves and at the situations in which we find ourselves.

Norma's wit was incredibly quick. She would often have a quick comeback ready for your remark before you even knew what your remark was going to be. When you uttered your remark, there it was immediately--her quick retort, made with eyebrows raised, mouth open with an expectant half smile growing wider as your laugh started to leave your lips, and then, her sweet laugh would arrive. Often her quick comeback would not only make you laugh but would get her point across, so you knew where she stood.

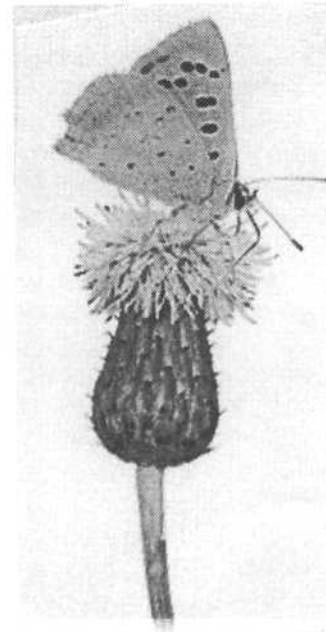
I'll always remember, at the Board meetings, laughing at Norma's dramatics--they weren't really jokes so much as they were quick impromptu mini productions, over



soon after they started, brilliant in their brevity, stagecraft, and originality. They were amazingly brief considering they were often open-ended, with Norma reacting to the comments of others and rolling it all into a fun and effective interlude of spirited repartee lasting 10-20 seconds, perhaps. Her adroit verbal maneuvers were unable to be duplicated, borne of her unique personality. Try as one might, one could never fake a personality like hers. Such a strong personality comes from deep within.

I will remember how direct she was, how sure she was of what she wanted and knew to be right. We could all benefit from being as decisive as she was--such that we know for sure what we want. This certitude was part of what gave Norma her commanding, endearing personality. Often those with the strongest personalities have the softest hearts. Norma was kind. She was an encouragement to me and no doubt to countless others.

Jerry Lippert, Board Member



Norma was a spectacular human being who left a legacy that will be enjoyed by many, many generations. She was one of the most effective people I have ever known and certainly a warm human being. Like all of us, I will sorely miss her.

*Aaron Perlman, M. D.
Board Member*

Norma and my husband, Bill, were driving home a few years ago from an Oxbow, Inc. meeting when Bill became seriously ill. Norma drove him immediately to the Good Samaritan emergency room and then kindly waited for me to arrive. She may have saved Bill from a heart attack and Bill and I were eternally grateful.

After Bill died, Norma slyly nudged me to "finish out Bill's term on the board" and about two months later nudged again, to follow him as editor of *Wetland Matters*. And you couldn't say no to Norma! She was my superb guide in these endeavors, an encouraging, patient guide --plus always fun to be with. However, what I remember most: Norma's selflessness, her wit and her dedication to her wetlands. God bless her!

Jeanne Bocklage, Editor, Wetland Matters





TOP: Norma at the Oxbow with Cinergy General Manager for Public Affairs John Stowell accepting the deed last December to 28 acres of land, the first gift from a corporation.

BOTTOM: Norma was a member of the Good Samaritan Hospital Legacy Society and honored on a riverboat cruise on the Ohio in September, 2002.

FRONT COVER: Norma delivering her acceptance speech at the National Wetlands Award Ceremony, Washington, D.C., June 28, 2001.