



Anne Shepherd in the pine forest planted by her family
Photo : © Stansje Plantenga

Anne Shepherd

Un gesture for the conservation of nature's treasures

The following testimonial is of Anne Shepherd, the daughter of the late Robert Shepherd, founder of the Ruiter Valley Land Trust. Anne now lives in Toronto, where she works as a psychotherapist and psychoanalyst.

"My father, Robert Shepherd, was a doctor in a small town in Ontario when we moved to the West-Island of Montreal where I grew up. I was very influenced by my active and outdoorsy father who loved camping, canoeing and "roughing it in the woods". He encouraged a sense of travel and adventure in us. He was also a role model as a medical professional who loved his work and went from being a GP to specializing in

psychiatry and running a psychiatric community in the Eastern Townships. My mother Dorothy was an elegant "Jackie Kennedy" type woman who enjoyed decorating and entertaining and spending time at our cottage on Stoney Lake in Ontario.

My father gave us a great love of the land both at our summer cottage and at the property in the Eastern Townships he purchased when I was a young girl. Originally it was a very modest farm owned by a farmer named Smith. The farmhouse and barn were literally falling down. I remember sleeping in the rundown farmhouse one night; the walls were chewed half-way down by racoons. The farmer would throw all

his left-over junk in the ditch. Initially Robert bought it as a place to camp--it was pretty rustic, we slept in an old cow shed or Army tent.

My father had us planting trees at an early age. His initial plan was to develop a tree farm. A big pleasure was walking the land and recognizing the different species of trees. I remember carrying heavy buckets of pine seedlings for the men to plant during the black fly season--now that was a labour of love! My father acquired more property and built several log homes to house the psychiatric community that he ran for several years. They experimented with growing their own crops and raising their own animals and at

one point sponsored a refugee family from Thailand.

In the 70's, my father deeded us each a tract of ten acres on his property which is now the Ruitter Valley Land Trust (previously named Forest Farm). There was no building on the property and we continued to plant mostly pine seedlings which are now a towering grove and represent our work as a family and our desire to replenish the earth and conserve it for future generations.



One of the valuable wetlands of the Ruitter Valley
Photo : © Christiane Foley

I was motivated to donate my property in November 2002 in large part by the influence of my father and his wife Stansje Plantenga. Their profound interest in the preservation of natural areas has allowed me to understand the

ecological value of the land in the Ruitter Valley and its importance for the animal and plant species that live there. I had seen others donate land through the Ecological Gift Program and I wanted to support the aims of the Ruitter Valley Land Trust in a personal manner. There was the benefit of the tax receipt as well--we all appreciate whatever tax break we can get!

Today, I enjoy walking the trails with Stansje and visiting the spot where my father's ashes are buried by his beloved trees on the mountainside. I am proud to know my action will contribute to the greater good of nature's treasures. Hopefully my contribution will encourage my family and friends to do the same. I hope my children and their children will be able to walk beneath the pine grove and respect and love nature the way we did. I know my father would be proud of my having given back in a meaningful way."