

IN MEMORIAM
WALTER F COXE

May 29, 1898 - August 12, 1987

Conservationist, educator, historian and leader of boys and men, "Walter Coxe was headed for 90," so wrote one of his close friends in the media, "when the bell tolled for him last month. His influence may outlive his remarkable life span. The grand old man who so loved Boy Scouts, birds, clean air, water and sports, Georgia Tech and George Washington did leave his mark. He was Birmingham's for the last 47 years. Thousands of us are richer for knowing him - not financially, better than that - spiritually... Coxe's legacy emphasizes the blessings of the ordered and wonderful world God gave us all. Enjoy it. Preserve it. In a quiet, though ever steadfast, way, Coxe orchestrated harmony between man and Nature. His was a beautiful life."

One of Alabam's leading conservationists, Walter Coxe, in the words of another friend, "for a half-century devoted himself to preserving the natural environment from human excesses." His efforts included protection of trees, wilderness areas, parks and endangered species, improvement of air and water quality, and bringing an increased awareness and appreciation of the natural resources of the state to people of all ages. He was widely known through his many appearances on radio and other public programs.

Walter Coxe produced, directed and narrated a full-color motion picture, The Bankhead Forest - An Alabama Adventure, filmed by BAS members Dennis Holt and Perry Covington, and was commended by Congressmen for his testimony in support of the initial Sipsey Wilderness in the Bankhead Forest that he so dearly loved. Back before the need for conservation was as well known as it is today, he was testifying in support of Alabama's first attempt to pass a clean water act. He was honored by the City of Birmingham in 1976 for "his numerous civic and community

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services and his dedicated and untiring efforts to preserve our streams, rivers, trees, and wildlife..." and in 1984 received one of the prestigious Sol Feinstone Environmental Awards, given nationwide to a few citizens "who, by their voluntary action, and on an unpaid basis, have made an outstanding contribution to improving the physical environment."

Walter Coxe was President and long-time Board member of the Birmingham Audubon Society, Director for many years of its Audubon Wildlife Film Series, President of the Alabama Ornithological Society, member of the first Board of Directors of The Alabama Conservancy, and for many years participated in ornithological surveys for the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Audubon Society. He initiated a program to purchase natural history films for placement in the Birmingham Board of Education Film Library to be seen by schoolclasses and made available to other groups and published Blanche Dean's Trees and Shrubs in the Heart of Dixie (still the authoritative text on trees and shrubs of Alabama). BAS's fund for scientific research in various fields of biology is named for him. He made frequent appearances before groups, speaking on natural history and conservation, and in his later years was still giving students at Avondale School programs on our woodlands and Indian lore.

Mr Coxe was, in addition, very active in the scouting program, having been scoutmaster for many years of Boy Scout Troop 37 in Elyton Village that was distinguished by its high number of Eagle Scouts. He was also instrumental in developing the Webelos program to provide a unit within the Cub Scouts for transition to the Boy Scouts and was a recipient of the Silver Beaver award, one of the highest in scouting.

Walter Coxe was an alumnus of Georgia Tech and served on its National Alumni Board of Directors. He began his career in advertising and public relations in New Orleans where he had many famous clients and was a member of the Sugar Bowl Committee. On moving to Birmingham, he became

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a member of the City Sales Club, served as an officer of Civitan International for many years, and was a founding member of the Downtown Club. In addition, he was a recognized authority on the life of George Washington and the American Revolution and gave generously of his time to present programs on those subjects.

His influence cannot be better expressed than it was by one of his scouts: "He was a great leader who taught me by example, and he instilled confidence in one's self to be the best you could be. Most importantly, Mr Coxe was a true friend and even though he has left us, the ideals and values for which he stood will live on within us all."

In the avian world (and again in the words of one of his friends), "The Common Mockingbird was his favorite. He knew its vocabulary. He cherished its ceaseless song, joyous mostly - as was Walter Coxe, for nearly 90 years." Walter Coxe was laid to rest by the Eagle Scouts of Troop 37, his fellow wildlife film directors, his filmmakers and many other friends on the south slope of Shades Mountain overlooking his beloved Cahaba River where he had oftentimes canoed and taken bird surveys. He gave a full measure toward appreciation of God's magnificent creation and in making His world a better one in which to live - and, perhaps whenever we hear the song of the Mockingbird, we shall remember Walter Coxe, "that gentle man - with people and with birds and animals." BAS extends its deepest sympathy to his son Walter, his grand-daughter Barrie, the other members of his family and his many friends.

Without birds, where would we
have learned that there can
be song in the heart?
--Hal Borland

