

TANGLEWOOD—A COMMUNITY TREASURE

If one started at the corner of Main and Water Streets in downtown Elmira and drove north on Main Street two blocks to Church Street, west on Church Street to Coleman Avenue, and up Coleman Avenue, it would take you ten minutes to drive the five miles to the entrance of one of our community's treasures—the Tanglewood Community Nature Center and Museum.

When did the story of Tanglewood begin? If you were to take Dan Hull's Glaciers to Gleason nature walk through Tanglewood, he would point out fossils in the fieldstone walls that date back to the Devonian era 350 million years ago. He would also tell you that the topography is a result of the First Ice Age 100 million years ago. A more current date would be 1787 when Christian Minier became the first settler in the Chemung Valley. He was followed by other settlers, including loggers who clear-cut much of the land and floated the hemlock logs down the Chemung River to the nearest saw mill. Some of the land that was clear-cut might have been along the current West Hill Road, the sight of the first Tanglewood Nature Center.

125 years ago the land that became Tanglewood Forest was a homestead farm belonging to Mr. And Mrs. William Armstrong. Their house stood near the site on which the Runey Educational Center was later built

in Tanglewood Forest. Mr. Armstrong was well known in New York State for helping establish the New York State Grange. He died in 1890, and shortly thereafter, his family left the farm. The land was farmed by other families until it was reforested beginning in the 1920's

The Elmira Water Board was established in 1913. It had purchased 100 acres on West Hill above the reservoir that was vital to the Elmira water supply. Farmers in the area had been working the land and erosion was occurring which threatened the water supply.

Rufus Stanley was the man who alerted the community to the need for reforestation. Stanley came to Elmira in 1885 at the age of 26 having had earlier experience working for the YMCA. He was a pioneer in forming agricultural and homemaking clubs for boys and girls in the county. In 1912 the clubs were combined to form the Achievement Club, the objectives and tenets being heads, hands, hearts, and health. He designed the four leaf clover club emblem and was one of the first persons in the United States to have the type of club that later developed nationally into 4H clubs.

Charles Barber, writing in an Elmira newspaper in Aug. 1955, said: "Stanley was a naturalist and teacher, a deep thinking man who loved young people and devoted his life to helping them.A hike with Stanley was something boys never forgot. He talked about birds and animals,

taught about trees and flowers, and instilled principles of goodness along with his lessons on nature.”

Tom Byrne, in his history of Chemung County, said of Stanley: “Few men of Elmira made such a deep impression or left such a revered memory in the hearts of boys and girls.”

Stanley became one of the first Achievement Club agents in 1914 and held that position until his death in 1926.

Working with the Elmira Rotary Club and Harvey O. Hutchinson, Superintendent of the Elmira Schools, Stanley supervised the planting of White Pine, Scotch Pine, and Norway Spruce trees on West Hill starting in 1923. From 1923-1947 the Elmira school calendar included the item “Arbor Day ½ day to be fixed depending on the weather”. On that day the school children ventured to West Hill to plant what became the Tanglewood Forest. In 1928, 27,000 trees were reported to have been planted.

The forest grew. In 1966 Nelson Pittler started working summers for the Water Board. He became a full-time forester in 1969. He suggested the name Tanglewood Forest because the farms that had been in the area had been called Tanglewood Farms. There are two explanations for the name: Nelson Pittler says that the wild roses that grew around the base of the farm houses were called Tanglewood; Bill Ostrander says he had heard

that, when farmers tried to clear the vines and low-lying shrubs on their property, they frustratingly called the growth “just Tanglewood”. It is interesting to note that what was a source of frustration for farmers has now become a source of community pride.

As the trees matured, some logging was begun in the forest. Nelson was involved with the logging and wondered why a Canadian firm was so interested in the Norway spruce. He later learned that this firm knew that the wood of the spruce was used in Germany to make stringed instruments, so they were buying Tanglewood spruce cheaply and reselling it to firms in Germany at a nice profit!

The logging attracted the interest of local school children and scouts who asked for tours of the forest. Nelson was interested in teaching the children about the forest but this took time away from his forestry work. He talked with John Copley, the Manager of the Water Board, about this conflict. It so happened that at that time there was political pressure on the Water Board to use the land near the reservoir for recreational purposes. John Copley decided that developing a nature center would preserve the land, and, at the same time, satisfy the politicians.

John Copley formed an ad hoc committee to study the possibility of forming a nature center. The committee included Pat Runey, Dr. Arthur C.

Smith Jr., Kelsey Martin, Dorothy Smith and others. Dorothy Smith remembers the committee meeting at Lag's Restaurant downtown for lunch. "We were a motley crew but we got to know each other and decided that the community should have a nature center." As a result of the planning committee's work, The Tanglewood Community Nature Center became incorporated as a private non-profit organization in 1973. The Center leased two sites from the Elmira Water Board: Tanglewood Forest - 16 acres, and Tanglewood Farm - 65 acres, both on West Hill Road. John Copley and Kelsey Martin each contributed \$500 to be used as seed money during the first year of Tanglewood's existence.

Tanglewood's first officers were:

Irving T. (Pat) Runey	President
Dr. Arthur C. Smith Jr.	Vice-President
John G. Copley	Treasurer
Kelsie G. Martin	Secretary

Tanglewood's first board of directors included:

Richard L. Brown, John F. Cascio, George E. Dennis, Raymond L. Fox, Reverend Walter G. Griffith, Wilifred I. Howard, Norman L. Jennings, Robert W. Lester, William F. Mungo, Jr., William E. Palmer, Nelson E. Pittler, Barbara Preucil, Bruce Schwartz,

Dorothy Smith and Kent R. Woloson.

Pat Runey, Tanglewood's first president, was highly respected in Elmira. He was in advertising and public relations and retired from Marine Midland Bank in 1971. Archie Kieffer said, "Pat was the guiding force at Tanglewood. He was the one that got the Rotary Club to put up the original seed money and who oversaw the lease with the Water Board for the land. A lot of people had talked about the idea of Tanglewood but Pat took the responsibility to make it come true". Dorothy Smith remembers that "Pat was an enthusiastic leader. He was very generous with his time and money and would undertake any activity. You couldn't say no to Pat. He solicited money and members by speaking at service clubs". Pat was president, membership chairman, trail guide, and newsletter editor all at the same time! He served as president until 1978 and newsletter editor until his death in 1981. He and his wife Charlotte lived across the road from Tanglewood Forest.

As mentioned before, Nelson Pittler, the Elmira Water Board forester, provided tours of the forest before Tanglewood Nature Center was formed. He continued to work as a naturalist for the new organization and became a member of its Board of Directors. He designed the trail system at Tanglewood, constructed an outdoor amphitheater, and built bridges over

wide drainage ditches.

Nelson spent more time developing Personius Woods than he did at Tanglewood Forest. It provided an open field environment compared to Tanglewood Forest. Nelson worked on plantings over the years, and he was pleased when Jennifer Trimber noticed in 1983 that his efforts had resulted in a “classic textbook layout”. Nelson resigned from the Board in 1974. He worked for the Water Board from 1966 to 1996.

The suggested master plan for Tanglewood was created by John Weeks, the director of the Rogers Conservation Center near Utica.

The first purchase that Tanglewood made was a picnic table that was used both by visitors and the Board of Directors for their lunch meetings.

During the first 6 months of 1974 there were 1,344 visitors—33 school groups and 34 other groups were among the visitors. Initially parking was available on the reservoir side of West Hill Road. Work was begun by the Chemung County Highway Department on a new road and parking area in June 1974.

In the fall of 1974 a trail for the blind, called the Sensitivity Trail, was developed for the visually handicapped. The Elmira Jaycees produced and installed the trail signs and markers, and Jon German, who is visually impaired, made and installed Braille signs so the blind could identify trees

and shrubs. A guide rope along the trail had indicators that alerted the blind to Braille signs ahead. The Chemung Valley Junior Women's Club sponsored the construction of the trail.

Dorothy Smith's favorite Sensitivity Trail story is about a community ambassador from England who spent some time at Tanglewood while visiting the Smiths. She thought the Braille Trail was a wonderful idea. She took pictures of the trail, and on returning to England, presented the idea to the president of the blind association in her community. He liked the idea and liked her even more. He was a widower and she had never married. They were married and she wrote Dorothy about how Tanglewood had changed her life.

1975 was a busy year at Tanglewood. Plans were begun for construction of an environmental education building to include a meeting room, library, office, and reception area. The dimensions of the footprint were to be 24X48 feet. Fred Petrie volunteered to be the architectural consultant.

Fred was a graduate of MIT where he majored in architecture. Before returning to Elmira, he worked for a Chicago firm that attempted unsuccessfully to sell the world on prefabricated houses. He played a role in the planning of the 1939 World's Fair, and during World War II worked on

drawings for air fields in Alaska. He returned to Elmira in 1945 to join his friend Don Fudge, working for the architectural firm of Fudge and Underhill.

The construction of the education building was undertaken at BOCES with two sections of the building to be moved to Tanglewood upon completion. BOCES offered to contribute the labor for the building which was 50% of the proposed cost of \$20,000. The Tripp Foundation contributed \$11,000 and Tanglewood was challenged to raise \$9,000. The Elmira Heights Rotary Club donated a bulletin board and information center that was placed on the road just above the parking lot.

In May and June of 1975 more children visited Tanglewood than during the previous year. Guides were needed to help Nelson Pittler, and Pat and Charlotte Runey and Bill and Marie Personius volunteered to be guides. Each guide took 20—30 school children in a group.

Charlotte Runey, like her husband Pat, was a longtime naturalist. She was a Home Economics graduate from Cornell and, according to Archie Kieffer, “She was the spark plug behind the large membership of the Chemung County Home Bureau and as such broadcasted weekly about Home Bureau subjects for many years. She was really the power that started today’s Tanglewood”.

Bill Personius was in charge of the engineering department at

NYSEG and Marie was a homemaker. Before Tanglewood was created, the Personius family used to hike from their home on Ogden Ave. to the land across from what became Personius Woods. Bill and Marie were both active in scouting before joining Tanglewood. They loved nature and were bird experts. Marie was also a plant enthusiast and Bill's area of expertise was trees. They were "fine teachers and their enthusiasm was infectious" (Star Gazette 2/3/79). They were honored as Chemung County Senior Citizens of the Year in 1987 for their volunteer work at Tanglewood, Meals on Wheels, the Arnot Ogden Hospital, and the Chemung County Audubon Society. Tanglewood Farm was eventually named Personius Woods in their honor.

Gil (Gib) Merrill arrived on the Tanglewood scene in 1975 as the speaker at Tanglewood's 3rd Annual Meeting. Gib spoke on "The Niche of the Nature Center in our Environment". He was Asst. Professor of Natural Science at Elmira College and had taught environmental and biologic science for 24 years before coming to Elmira. He had worked at the Boston Museum of Science, the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Science, and the Squam Lake Science Center in New Hampshire where he served as director. He was elected to the Tanglewood Board of Directors in 1977 and served many years. In 1990, when he was professor emeritus at Elmira

College, he was hired as Naturalist at Tanglewood with responsibilities for developing educational programs and acting as consultant to Director/Naturalist Bill Ostrander.

After a revision of plans for the nature center building, the first boards were nailed together at BOCES in December 1976 under the direction of George Dennis, Director of Vocational Education at BOCES. The building at BOCES was completed in the Spring of 1977 and Mr. Dennis was extremely proud of the work of his students. Bull dozing, back hoeing, and pouring of the concrete forms including concrete walls also took place during the Spring. On July 11, 1977 the two halves of the building finally arrived by truck from BOCES, were carefully lifted off the trucks by a crane, lowered to the foundation and put together. Clarence Crandall had drilled a deep well, which turned out to be artesian, as a gift to Tanglewood. So the building had water but it still needed electricity, a heating system, and a sewage facility. This was gradually accomplished and the center opened for daily use on May 3, 1980.

At the Annual Meeting held February 16, 1977, it was announced that there was \$23,974 cash on hand (which included money for the educational building), over 2,500 school children were given guided tours in 1976, and it was expected that the 1977 membership would exceed 1,100.

The Spring Edition of "Tanglewood Talk" announced that Bill Ostrander had been hired as a part time teacher/naturalist. Bill was a graduate of Cornell where he majored in environmental science. Pat Runey knew Bill as Vice President of the Audubon Society and asked him to come work at Tanglewood. He worked 20 hours a week and was paid 10 cents an hour over minimum wage. Despite his title, his main job was to maintain and develop the trail system. Two new trails were added to the trails that already existed. Bill's interest in birds started at age 12, and by the time he arrived at Tanglewood, he was an expert birder. The Personiuses trained him to be a nature educator and when he left Tanglewood for the first time in 1983, he was spending half his time in nature education and half in forest management.

When Bill left in 1983, he and his wife attended a bible college for a year. He then taught at Ross Corners Christian Academy for 3 years before returning to Elmira and, eventually, Tanglewood in 1988. He stayed at Tanglewood for another 7 years working as an educator and executive director.

Jennifer Heyworth Trimber, who followed Bill as Director/Naturalist, remembers him as a purist who managed for wildlife and let the land grow. He was a role model as a naturalist educator in the fields. "He could

manage 100 kids on a field trip and keep them all focused.”

When asked about Tanglewood’s strengths Bill replied, “The community and staff commitment and the proximity of its location to the county population center”. He, like so many people feels strongly that children need to be taught to appreciate wildlife and their environment and be responsible for each. He also would like to see the leadership of Tanglewood be more diverse.

In 1978 Dorothy Smith suggested having a Christmas party for birds at Tanglewood. A special tree was designated for children to place gifts of food for birds and animals. The first party was rained out, but the idea was popular and parties were held for many years.

At the Annual Meeting in 1979, Dr. Arthur C. Smith Jr. was elected the 2nd president of Tanglewood. Art grew up in Elmira and remembers hiking in the old and new Tanglewood areas as a boy. He returned to Elmira in 1951 to practice ophthalmology, and gradually moved up Hillcrest Road to the current Gleason Meadows area. He eventually purchased 1,200 acres of land around Gleason Meadows and went into the cattle business with a herd of 100 cows. Art felt that farming was a good experience for his sons while they were growing up. He ended his cattle business in the late 1970s, after the children left home. In 1980 he gave

The Nature Conservancy 300 acres of his land.

During Art's 4 year term as president, the Runey Education Building was completed and opened. A plan was devised to build a trail from Tanglewood Forest to Tanglewood Farm, but permission to cross private land couldn't be secured. A gift shop was created in the Runey Building, and a volunteer craft group started meeting on Tuesday mornings with the resulting crafts being sold to benefit Tanglewood.

Pat Runey died May 22, 1981 and the following tribute to him by his nephew, James D. Stocker, appeared in the Summer 1981 edition of Tanglewood Talk:

“At Tanglewood he lavished care and love;
A perfect focus for his eye and ear;
His classroom lined by trees and sky above
His teachers: flowers, birds, and gentle deer.
And human nature too bloomed in his field;
Each person in his orbit felt his joy.
No power could his enthusiasm shield.
As man, he kept the wonderment of boy.
As student of his world, he truly knew
Man's neither nature's master nor its slave.

As teacher to us all, in balance true;

What nature gave him, he to nature gave.”

In 1982 it was noted that Tanglewood’s constitution gave equal emphasis to scientific, cultural, recreational, and educational pursuits. It was felt that the overall purpose of Tanglewood should be to educate the community about the environment. Accordingly, the constitution was amended to read, ”The purpose of the corporation is to promote and participate in the process of developing the community’s awareness, appreciation, and understanding of the environment”.

Dorothy Smith became the 3rd Tanglewood president in 1983. Her goals were to significantly increase the membership and develop other stable sources of income to improve the financial base. She was also instrumental in developing term limits for the Board of Directors in an effort to get more people involved with fresh ideas which would lead to new projects.

Jennifer Heyworth was hired in 1983 to replace Bill Ostrander as Director/Naturalist when he resigned. Jennifer had graduated from the College of Environmental Science and Forestry at Syracuse in 1982 and had worked briefly at Spencer Crest Nature Center and for the Parks Service in Philadelphia. She was Tanglewood’s only employee at the time

and was paid \$12,000 a year with no benefits.

The education programs in the 1980s were mainly for children.

Jennifer worked with John Arikian and Jim Carter of the Elmira City School District to coordinate Tanglewood's curriculum with that of the school's.

Tanglewood is reaching the same number of students now as it did in the 1980s. There were Sunday afternoon family programs then with lectures or walks attended by 20—30 people. Tanglewood was free then, except for memberships, and was “all volunteer powered”. Jennifer resigned in 1986.

12,000 people visited Tanglewood in 1984

In 1985 July workshops were started for children in cooperation with the Arnot Art Museum.

John Slechta, a Horseheads beekeeper, constructed and installed an observation bee hive in the Runey Building. The hive was 1½ feet long and wide and a few inches thick. It was made of glass and connected to the outside by a clear plastic tube. The hive was installed in the spring and removed for the winter as the bees needed a larger hive to survive the cold weather.

In the 1985 summer issue of Tanglewood Talk, John Slechta wrote the following about bees: “A colony of bees is truly a miniature city.

Consider the following comparisons of a honeybee colony and a typical

city:

The hive has a large population in a very small area. Our small hive has about 3,000-5,000 bees. (A full size hive may contain over 100,000 bees.)

It has a system of government. A small group of control bees exerts a definite influence over the activities of the rest of the bees.

It has its own police force. From the first day at Tanglewood, guard bees have protected the entrance of the hive from intruding robber bees from other colonies, and from other insects such as wasps, yellow jackets, and ants.

The hive also has a sophisticated communications system. The combination of bee dances, hormonal signals, and other physical activities rivals our newspaper, radio, and TV communication media.

A highly skilled construction crew is always ready to build and repair the wax honeycomb as needed.

Food (honey and pollen) and water are efficiently stored until needed.

The temperature control system provides heating and cooling to maintain interior hive temperatures to an accuracy that rivals our best building's heating and air conditioning systems. Despite air temperature

variations of over 100 degrees throughout the year, the brood nest stays at a steady 95 degrees at all times.

There is a rather sophisticated sanitation system. Just watch the inhabitants carrying dead bees and other debris out through the glass entrance tube if you doubt it.

It also has traffic congestion. Take another look through the glass entrance tube.”

Turk Rose became the 4th president of Tanglewood in 1985. No plan existed at the time for the further development of Tanglewood. The Planning and Development Committee started generating such a plan to look at resources (staff, land, and money), goals, and goal achievement. A rough first draft of a master plan was published in the 1986 summer “Tanglewood Talk”. The identified problems were:

“1. The terms of Tanglewood’s license agreement with the Elmira Water Board offers Tanglewood no control over the land it uses or the investments it makes in those lands.

2. The lack of diversity in vegetation and wildlife at our 16 acre forest site severely restricts the kinds and focus of Tanglewood’s educational activities. In addition, the site is too small to offer visitors the opportunity to truly get away from it all.

3. The absence of a large body of surface water on the lands which Tanglewood is licensed to use plays an important role in limiting the kinds of wildlife that visit Tanglewood and which can, therefore, be enjoyed by the visiting public. In addition, it hamstring Tanglewood's involvement in teaching visitors about aquatic ecosystems.

4. Meeting all of the administrative and educational responsibilities associated with running Tanglewood is simply too much work for one paid staff member to handle."

The suggested solutions to the identified problems were:

a. to revise our present license agreement with the Elmira Water Board so that Tanglewood is afforded more control over the land it is licensed to use;

b. to maintain our 16-acre forest site essentially as is, using it as the primary location for classroom instruction, group meetings, and brief outdoor educational activities;

c. to take advantage of the vegetative diversity offered at our 62 acre Reinbold Farm property making it accessible and usable;

d. to obtain from the Elmira Water Board and the City of Elmira permission to use the Hoffman Creek reservoir and the land surrounding same for nature center activities;

e. to add to our staff a person charged with handling most of the administrative tasks associated with running Tanglewood.

The first of these goals was achieved when Sister M. Rosaria Hughes became Business Administrator in 1986. A graduate of St. Bonaventure, she came to Tanglewood after serving 5 years as Program Planner and Developer of the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry.

Turk Rose resigned as president at the end of 1986 to be replaced by Brenda Norris, the Tanglewood treasurer and an active community volunteer. She announced plans to develop the Farm Property and make needed improvements to the Forest Property.

In 1987 Jennifer Trimber resigned as Director/Naturalist to work at the Soaring Center. She was replaced by Randy Caccia who worked one year before resigning. Bill Ostrander returned in 1988 for another 7 year term.

Brenda Norris's term as president ended in 1988 and Bill Morse was elected for the first of many terms. An article in the Oct-Dec 1993 "Tanglewood Talk" stated that Bill "turned out to be another visionary president and a make it happen president, much like Tanglewood's original president Pat Runey". In the first year of Bill's presidency, grants, gifts, and a contribution from Chemung County totaled over \$2,000.

During the early years of Bill Morse's presidency, a contract was made with the Cornell Cooperative Extension Association to help with insurance and retirement benefits for the Tanglewood staff; Tanglewood committed to buy 172 acres from Art Smith on Upper Coleman and also committed to keep this land "forever wild" except for activity uses and building that advanced the mission of Tanglewood; and a new building was planned at a vantage point overlooking Leach Hill, Dutch Hill, and Mt Zoar to the south, and to the north a 5 acre pond that was to be constructed.

The money to purchase the Smith property came from a \$90,000 gift from the Virginia Taylor Gleason estate, as well as donations from the Chemung Canal Trust Company, the Elmira Savings Bank, the Anderson Evans Foundation, and the William Cooper Foundation.

Gib Merrill started work as a Tanglewood naturalist in 1989 and created the Tanglewood—WETM "Oh My" television program that premiered at noon on September 8, 1990. Gib and Bill Ostrander presented the "Oh My's" of nature weekly on the program.

A scale model of the proposed 11,000 sq ft facility was constructed by John Lusk's architectural firm in Hornell and was available for viewing at the Runey Center in the fall of 1991.

Tanglewood closed on the purchase of Art Smith's 172 acres on

Upper Coleman on August 30, 1991. This is adjacent to 179.6 acres of “forever wild” land to the west owned by Art Smith’s children and 300 acres of Nature Conservancy land to the south, and completes a 650 acre “forever wild” site.

The Tanglewood land was named Gleason Meadows in memory of Virginia and Herbert Gleason. Virginia’s bequest provided the bulk of the money used for the purchase. Both Gleasons were very much interested in the environment and were members of the Chemung Valley Audubon Society. Virginia volunteered annually to collect statistics phoned to her by people observing their bird feeders on the day of the Chemung Valley Audubon Society’s Christmas bird count. Herbert was interested in photography, especially of birds, and his collection was shared by Tanglewood and the Audubon Society.

The name “Meadows” was appropriate because large portions of the property were meadows in later stages of plant succession. The meadow is an ecosystem that, although most often created by man, is rapidly disappearing throughout New York State. As more meadow land reverts back to forest or is developed, the wildlife dependent upon it also disappears. Meadows are very rare on public land.

Art Smith became interested in rattlesnakes in the 1960s when one

of his patients, who caught and sold rattlesnakes, took him on some snake expeditions in Pennsylvania. Snakes sold at that time for \$3 to \$12 apiece and were used for meat, leather goods, snake oil, and roadside attractions.

Art later discovered rattlesnakes on his land and started protecting them in 1977, five years before they became an endangered species. Over the years Art has become an expert on rattlesnakes and he shared the following information about these snakes.

Rattlesnakes hibernate on south slopes in dens found in crevices of shale rock. The dens are believed to be thousands of years old. There are usually a number of entrances to a den. A den has to reach below the freezing point of earth in order for snakes to be able to hibernate.

Hibernation usually starts between October and December and lasts until late April or early May when the weather turns warm.

It takes a group of at least 50 snakes to maintain viability.

A rattlesnake's diet consists of white footed mice, chipmunks, and birds. The snakes determine the runway of small animals along a log and wait for the animals to pass. They may wait 2—3 days for a meal. Snakes can go 18 months without eating. Their metabolism slows down in the fall and returns to normal in the spring.

Rattlesnakes are 9 years old before they are able to reproduce,

breeding every three years. Snakes are impregnated in July or August and implantation is delayed until the following spring. The impregnated snake basks on rocks from spring to fall and doesn't eat during her pregnancy. There are 6—8 snakes per litter, each snake is 10—12 inches long at birth, and only 1% survive the first year. Neonates shed their skin in the first 10 days after birth and thereafter twice a year. Each time the skin is shed a segment is added to the rattle. The young follow the scent of their mother back to the den, and once this has occurred, they always return to the same den. They can't be transplanted and survive.

Males travel up to 4 miles from the den looking for food and females.

Snake venom is located in the parotid glands and moves to the fangs which are kept inside the mouth until the attack. 1/3 of rattlesnake bites are dry—no venom is released. There are two kinds of bites: legitimate and illegitimate. Illegitimate bites are those that occur when a snake is being handled. Legitimate bites are those that occur in nature and are rare.

The trails at Tanglewood are kept 4—6 ft wide and the grass is short so if a snake happened on a trail, it should be easily seen. Snakes average 3—4 feet in length. There are two color phases—yellow and black. The markings are described as “saddle or hash markings”. The head is much wider than the neck. The timber rattlesnake seen in this area depends on

camouflage to escape detection and would much rather flee than fight.

In 1992 the Elmira Rotary Club gave \$20,000 to assist in the construction of a 2.6 acre pond. Rotary has been very generous to Tanglewood over the years. It sponsored the planting of the forest in 1923 that became Tanglewood, and turned over proceeds of greater than \$5,000 from its Rotary-WELM Radio Day to Tanglewood in 1973.

The Soil and Conservation Service designed the wildlife pond to attract a maximum of wildlife diversity. The deeper areas were to be beneficial for cold water fish; the shallow areas attracted warm water fish, wading birds, dabbling ducks, and Canadian geese; the cattails attracted marsh animals; islands provided ducks and geese a safe place to nest; the lower water level at the end of summer exposed mud flats that attracted migrating shore birds.

Gib Merrill resigned from Tanglewood in 1992 to move to Massachusetts to be nearer his children. Also in 1992, Personius Woods was rededicated with the completion of a new trail, the Cottonwood Trail, and a newly completed parking area. New trail signs had been installed by Eagle Scout candidates.

Paul Baxter replaced Bill Morse as president in 1993. The Tanglewood Pond was constructed by John F. and John P. Wenzel. The

SITE Program (Students as Investigative Teams of Ecologists) was developed for 4th and 5th grade classes from Cohen Elementary School in Elmira Heights. Sites for study areas were prepared with each area having a live animal trap, a deer timer, a bird feeder, and woodpecker holes.

After a year's rest, Bill Morse returned to the Board of Directors in 1994 and again was elected president. The Elmira River School Project was developed by Tanglewood, the Arnot Art Museum, the Chemung County Historical Society, Booth School, and Riverside School. The project was funded by The Arts of the Southern Finger Lakes and its mission was "For students to use the materials and processes of one or more of the arts to express their understanding of the interactions between the social and natural environment and to evaluate the role of the artist in these interactions". One of the learning outcomes for students was to "express their knowledge of the Chemung River and its development as an ecosystem". The program is still in existence and the current format is for the students to spend one week in the classroom and one week in the field in the fall and one week in the field in the spring. The schools that are currently participating are: Beecher, Center Street, Chemung, Cohen, Diven, Gardner Road, and Riverside.

Other 1994 happenings were:

Peter Gordon became a shared employee of Tanglewood and the Chemung County Environmental Management Council. He worked in the Chemung County Soil and Water Conservation District to promote environmental programs available to schools.

Bill Ostrander laid out trails at Gleason Meadows.

Matt and Art Smith III started working on a pavilion near the smaller teaching pond.

Senator and Mrs. William Smith donated money to create a Presidents Trail.

Bill Ostrander resigned as Director/Naturalist to be replaced by Diane Sheaffer.

2400 students participated in education programs.

In 1995 Gleason Meadows had three main trail systems—Presidents (Blue) 1.8mi; Yellow 1.2mi; Red 1.25mi. The view from the Presidents Trail of the Chemung River palisades was and is spectacular. The 24X36 ft Gleason Meadow Pavilion was completed and provided shelter for school classes and trail walkers.

Claudia Minotti joined the Tanglewood staff in 1996 as the new naturalist, replacing Dianne Sheaffer who left to join her husband who had enlisted in the army. Claudia was trained in both field biology and

education. She had been teaching biology for non-majors at Bucknell University and was an adjunct professor at Elmira College, teaching biology. Her research interest was in ecological competition. In August 1996 the Presidents Trail; donated by Senator and Mrs. Smith, was dedicated and plans were announced to expand the trail system at Gleason Meadows to include some trails on Nature Conservancy property.

In 1997 Hunt Engineers was engaged to design a new nature center that would accommodate up to 200 people at a site next to the 2.5 acre Rotary Pond at Gleason Meadows. The building was to be on an 8,000 sq ft layout and cost \$100 a sq ft or \$800,000. The final Hunt plans called for a 6,100 sq ft building with an estimated cost of \$610,000 for the building and \$286,300 for site improvements, a road and a parking lot. Also in 1997 the joint trail system with The Nature Conservancy became a reality resulting in more than 6 miles of joint trails.

Margaret Todd passed away in 1998. She was a long time friend of Tanglewood who initiated the formation of a Natural History component of Tanglewood. Her vision was for Tanglewood to become a recognized Natural History Museum. Tanglewood was a member of the American Association of Museums when she died, and was moving forward to becoming an accredited Natural History Museum. This resulted in the name

change to Tanglewood Community Nature Center and Museum. The current Web of Life Museum is the result of Margaret Todd's vision.

Dalrymple Construction Company began work on the construction of the Gleason Meadow Road and Parking Lot in 1999. The Tanglewood Capital Campaign kicked off in May 1999 with Joanne Herman as Campaign Facilitator and a goal of \$1,000,000. The plans for the new facility included:

1. A 200 student auditorium with state of the art audio-visual projection.
2. Space surrounding the auditorium for exhibits of mounted and live specimens--The Web of Life Museum.
3. Viewing decks for both the 2.6 acre Elmira Rotary Pond to the north, and the fields with their abundant warblers and other birds to the south, with a vista of the Far Rockaway Hills in the distance.
4. Work room for exhibit preparation.
5. The K. T. Smith Memorial Library room.
6. The possible use of geothermal energy.
7. A fireplace opening out to the auditorium on one side and to the reception area on the other.

8. Adequate office and volunteer room space.
9. A gift shop.
10. A full basement providing adequate storage.

The Board of Directors authorized a search for a permanent Executive Director in 1999. Sadly Gib Merrill died unexpectedly on April 19, 1999 following surgery.

In 2001 the now \$1.8 million capital campaign reached its goal, thanks in large part to a \$500,000 contribution from New York State and to Assemblyman George Winner and Senator Randy Kuhl; Gail Foreman, former Executive Director of the Utica Zoo, was hired as Tanglewood's new Executive Director; and ground was broken for the building of the new Tanglewood Community Nature Center and Museum.

A geothermal heating and cooling system was installed in the new building thanks to the efforts of Board of Directors member Ralph Miller. Ralph had been interested in geothermal technology for a number of years and he felt that this was an ideal system for an environmentally focused organization. The system uses the constant temperature of the ground (51 degrees F 15 ft below the surface year round) as a source for both heating and cooling. A refrigerant is run through copper pipes 15 ft underground to the building and the gas or liquid phase of the material is used to heat or

cool the building. Each \$1 spent for electricity to run the compressors in the system produces \$5 worth of heating or cooling. The advantages of the system are:

1. It provides cooling in the summer without requiring a separate air conditioning system.
2. It removes or dehumidifies the moisture from cooling air in the summer.
3. It supplies heat to provide hot water needs year round.
4. It requires minimum maintenance.
5. It eliminates the need to use dangerous propane or dirty oil.

The use of the geothermal system at Tanglewood resulted in a \$78,000 grant from the New York State Energy and Development Authority.

Once the nature center opened, a Phase II Capital Campaign was begun to develop a museum in the form of a walk through immersion experience habitat. The name of the museum, "The Chemung Valley Web of Life" was suggested by Scott Moore who was elected president of Tanglewood in 2003. The museum encourages you to become part of nature. This interactive immersion in the sights and sounds of the deep forest, wet-land meadow, pond, river, riverine forest, and old field meadow

allows you to experience the environment in a unique way. There are displays of native reptiles and amphibians including the endangered Eastern Timber Rattlesnake. The museum opened in April 2003 and since then there have been over 16000 visits to the museum.

Tanglewood now has:

- A staff of six.
- Twenty-two Board Members.
- Seven Committees.
- Many many volunteers.
- A Web site: <http://tanglewoodnaturecenter.com>.

So that is the Tanglewood story, a story that started with Rufus Stanley who understood the importance of educating children about the environment and who acted to protect the environment by planting Tanglewood Forest. The story continues through the vision and work of so many people and has resulted in the treasure of Tanglewood, a beautiful Nature Center and Museum, 600 acres of “forever wild” land ten minutes from downtown Elmira, and a team of naturalists and educators whose mission is to educate our children and us about the importance of understanding, appreciating, and preserving our environment.

I appreciate being given access to the Tanglewood archives by the

Tanglewood staff and I thank the following people for sharing information and their Tanglewood stories with me: Paul Baxter, Don Brooks, Gail Foreman, Dan Hull, Arthur Kieffer, Ralph Miller, Scott Moore, Bill Morse, Bill Ostrander, Marie Personius, Nelson Pittler, Arthur Smith Jr., Dorothy Smith, Elaine Spacher, Stephanie Stone, and Jennifer Trimber.

Ralph B. Moore

April 2004