

THE BIKE TRAIL*(31 Aug 2009)*

You never know what you'll find on the bike trail --
Twenty miles of asphalt atop a former rail line,
The old Chesapeake & Ohio road between Nelsonville and Athens,
Now a people-friendly transportation corridor.

While resting at the West State Street park in Athens,
A young man on crutches passed by, going quite briskly,
His lower limbs no longer functioning normally,
He willed them to go as fast as they could -- a forced march.

This was a remarkable sight! Running on crutches!
What if he lost his balance, fell down on the hard pavement?
His tanned skin told me that this was not his first outing.
He was quite adept at what he was doing.

I stared in wonder until he was out of sight, never slowing.
How inspiring! This young man, disabled, giving it his all.
Had he been a runner prior to losing the full use of his legs?
Was he an injured athlete unable to give up what he loved?

I got on my bike and slowly approached him from behind.
He was going down the center of the trail, crutches a flying.
Normally I'd shout "Hello" to alert my presence,
But here, I'd gladly ride in the grass, if necessary, to pass.

He had worked up a good sweat, but kept up his grueling pace.
Should I say something? What about, "Way to go!"
I kept mum not knowing the proper protocol.
Saying nothing would not offend. Saying nothing seemed best.

Damn, on down the trail I regretted not saying something --
Even a simple "Hello" would have been better than silence.
I gave a silent prayer for his well-being and rode on,
Motivated by his determination and courage.

A mile further I came upon the Ohio University track team
Using the bike trail for their cross-country training.
If only they had the spirit of the man on crutches,
They would surely win most of their meets.

It would be a stroke of genius on the coach's behalf
If somehow he could incorporate the disabled with the able,
Both drawing strength from each other,
Both becoming winners in the race of life.

Yet further down the trail, all of this on the same day mind you,
I encountered a one-armed cyclist going the opposite direction,
Pedaling as happy as a lark, no trouble steering,
Not letting his disability interfere with enjoying the trail.

What tragedy had taken his arm?
Afghanistan, Iraq, cancer, a drunk driver?
Whatever, he was active. He was participating.
He probably had a lot in common with the man on crutches.

And lastly, I encountered a healthy young man afoot,
Well-built, handsome, jogging briskly, effortlessly,
Did he have any idea how fortunate he was to be whole?
Had he seen the man on crutches, the one-armed cyclist?

(10)

people

Life is so wonderful, even if it comes at us in different degrees.
Let's appreciate what we have
And not dwell upon what we don't.
Users of the bike trail drive that point home.

HOCKHOCKING - ADENA BIKE TRAIL

The Hockhocking - Adena Bike Trail is a wonderful asset to southeastern Ohio. I have been riding my bike on this trail several times a week ever since it opened, weather permitting, primarily from April through November. It is a good form of physical exercise and an excellent way to enjoy the outdoors. I always hate to see the winter months arrive when I have to put my bike in storage.

Having no immediate relatives in need of financial assistance, I decided to donate my real and personal property upon my death to the bike trail, primarily for the purpose of acquiring additional right-of-way and for capital improvements to the existing trail with the stipulation that their normal source of funding not be diminished by my contribution.

I have gotten so much pleasure from using the trail I wanted to help insure that others also benefited, hence the creation of the William L. Phillips Fund managed by the Foundation for Appalachian Ohio.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William Louis Phillips was born 19 April 1946 at Columbus, Ohio, a son of William Mundorff Phillips (1917-2004) and Luella Virginia Ream (1919-1996). His father was an electrical engineer, a graduate of The Ohio State University, who made a career with the Ohio Power Company (now American Electric Power). His mother was an English teacher, a graduate of Capital University in Columbus, who taught eighth grade courses in Canton (Summit Elementary) and Zanesville (Grover Cleveland Elementary).

The author attended the following public schools: Edgefield Elementary (1st grade), Jesse H. Mason Elementary (2nd - 8th) and Jackson Memorial High School where he was a member of the National Honor Society -- all of these schools in the Canton area. He graduated from The Ohio State University (1969) with a B.Sc. Degree in biological sciences majoring in botany.

He served two years as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Army's Chemical Corps: Fort Sill, Oklahoma (1969-1970) and Phu Bai, South Viet Nam (1970-1971) where he was attached to the 101st Airborne Division.

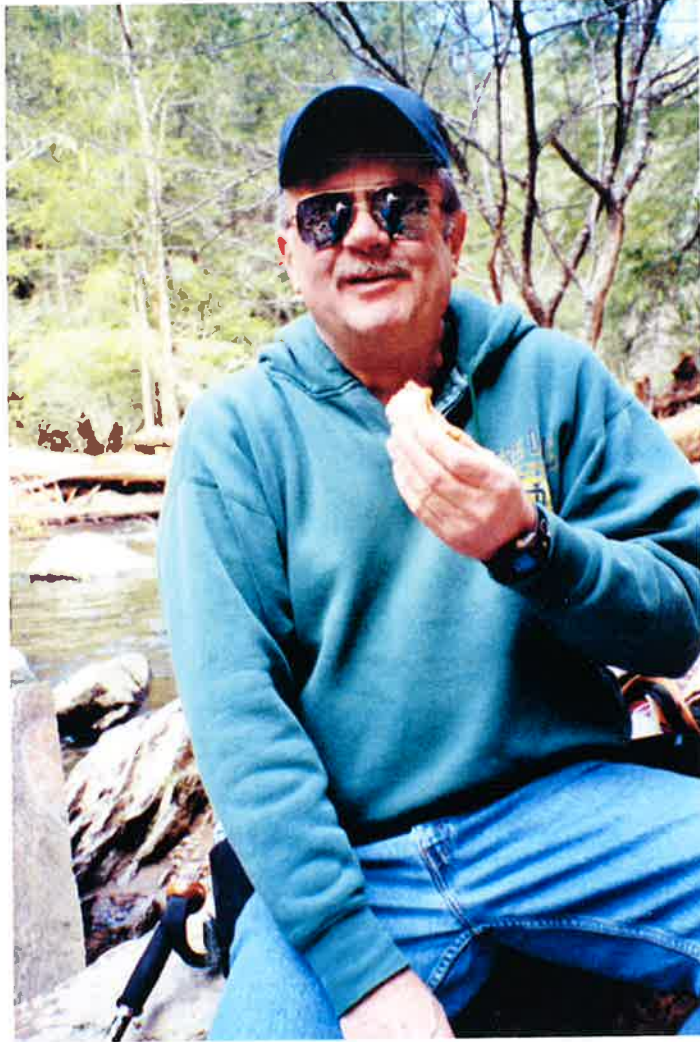
From 1971-1981, he was a self-employed landscape contractor (Louis Phillips & Associates) in Columbus providing service to mansions in the Bexley area. Since high school, he had an interest in genealogy and made a living researching for others as a Certified Genealogist, 1981-1990. Numerous publications pertaining to genealogy were deposited in the Library of Congress, the Mormon Library at Salt Lake City, the Ohio Historical Society, the Ohio Genealogical Society and the State Library of Ohio. His interest in professional researching waned, but not with regards to his personal family lines which appear on *Ancestry.com* with a family tree numbering over 50,000 persons.

In 1987, he opened a gift shop, the Wind Chime Shop, on his property in Hocking County, Ohio. This became a major source of income and a popular tourist attraction in the Hocking Hills State Parks area. In 1995, a second establishment was opened, Christmas Treasures Gift Shop, at the same location followed by a candle shop in 2000. All were sold in 2007 and he moved to a home on a 25-acre wooded tract in the same county which offered total isolation conducive to personal reflection and writing.

Other interests over the years included gardening, postcard and antique spoon collecting and bicycling, especially road-biking on a nearby rails-to-trails pathway between Nelsonville and Athens.

Writing poetry came easily and naturally, an outpouring of inner emotions and thoughts. Entire poems often flowed at one sitting with no struggling for words or ideas -- the pen had trouble keeping pace with the mind.

From: More Hill Country Poetry by W. Louis Phillips (2015)



W. LOUIS PHILLIPS

eating a store-bought granola bar

Abrams Falls, Smokey Mountains National Park

March 2004