



Dedication Address

By Edward Collins, President

October 9, 1988

My dear honored guests and friends. This day brings forth the joyous awakening of a dream. Finally, after nearly two years of dreaming and planning, here and now in this pleasant little building, stands the foundation stone and home of the Leelanau Conservancy.

Now, more than a dream, the Leelanau Conservancy will have the power to launch the vision of every person in Leelanau County that has wanted to preserve our land, our historic heritage and the quality of life we have come to enjoy here in the Land of Delight.

Let me assure you, this conservancy is here not as an abstract tool of the environmentalist. We are here not to raise commotion in township meetings, or twist the arms of politicians. We are here not to tie ourselves to trees, to outflank the developer, to deny the hunter, the fisherman and the golfer.

Let me tell you simply what we are.. in one word. We are..a FRIEND.

We shall be a friend.. to our local governments. We will help, where humanly possible, our township boards to solve, through first-rank technical assistance, our mutual problems in zoning, summer traffic congestion, waste disposal, water quality and historic preservation.

We shall be a friend..to our National Park Service. Indeed, Sleeping Bear Lakeshore ranks today as one of this country's largest conservancies. That land will be protected in public trust for generations to come. The land that is not in Sleeping Berar, however, now comes under the kind of pressure that has put stress on contiguous communities all around the country, such as Gatlinburg, West Yellowstone, and Provincetown. We don't want that to happen here.

We will hope and expect to be a friend..in partnership.. with developers, who would exercise their constitutional right to develop their land. We will diligently try to cooperate in the drawing of their plans and constructions, so that the land is not defaced, that wetlands not be filled, that human habitations be clustered, leaving open spaces for room to breathe.

But, let me tell you above all, we will be a friend..to the land.. and to you. You know well..that you and the land are inextricably tied together. You know well.. that is why you and I are living here; We both know well..that we love this land, and the land returns it..tenfold every day.

Here in Leelanau County, I think we are beginning to feel that time is running out. As Jim Harrison so eloquently put it in his poem, The Theory and Practice of Rivers: "The days are stacked against who we think we are."

Who do we think we are? Surely, if the American dream, with our notion of private property is to survive into the next generation, we Americans have got to act now... to save ourselves from ourselves. We cannot hope or expect that our federal government is equipped to take the long range view.

And closer yet, if Leelanau County is to enter the 21st century as the home of choice for all those who live here, we must act now...to save ourselves from ourselves. We cannot hope, nor should we expect.. that our local government is equipped to save the land. There simply is not the money. And as Will Rogers said; "Land..they ain't makin' it anymore."

That is why this organization, The Leelanau Conservancy, was founded, to join together..all of our people, the wealth and tremendous energy that imbues everyone who lives here, and together, address the ways we can save this beautiful land and our historic integrity.

Today, as we hold out our friendship to government, the developer, to the land and to you, will you all..please..join in friendship to your own Leelanau Conservancy? Together we shall accomplish..great..things. Thank you very much.