

## **Marc Taylor Memorial Service**

**June 24, 2012**

### **Thoughts for Marc Taylor**

*Comments by: Lynn Werner, Executive Director, Housatonic Valley Association*

It is hard, in just these few minutes, to summarize all that Marc means to me and to all of his colleagues and friends at HVA. Where to start, to end? That he is the best listener I have ever known? The most unflappable and patient man? Uncompromisingly faithful to facts, science and logic? Marc managed to be both a realist *and* an optimist. Both distinguished *and* lovable, all at the same time.

But in these sad days, there are two things that keep coming to mind when I think about Marc.

First, Marc's great, gracious, beaming smile... We saw a lot of that smile, especially when Marc was sharing a story about Jan and his family, which was often.

And second, the absolute joy Marc got from bringing people together, creating new partnerships and collaborations. I am and will remain constantly amazed at the sheer number of people Marc touched and helped connect with each other in his pursuit of healthy rivers.

Marc thought collaboration was sensational.

Ten years ago, when the CT Supreme Court decision on flows in the Shepaug River laid bare the sad fact that CT's river flow protection law did nothing to protect river flows, Marc reached out to every contact he had among his environmental friends, state agencies like CT DEEP, the Dept of Health and Dept of Public Utilities, federal agencies like USGS, water companies, private water experts to encourage us all to "get together and fix this problem ourselves." Well a partnership of sorts did emerge, although even Marc could not have foreseen just how complex the negotiations would become or how very long it would take. In the end, though, it was the strength of relationships forged in that initial partnership that helped make history when, late last year, CT became one of the first states in the country to pass Stream Flow Protection Regulations that actually have a chance of protecting stream flow.

Marc thought it was sensational.

Marc was a quiet instigator, too. He delighted in introducing different kinds of people. He got a kick out of it. A few years back he nominated Bob Houlihan, VP of Heritage Development, to HVA's Board of Directors. He caused a bit of a stir with his suggestion because, after all, Bob is a ..... developer. As the debate continued around the board table, Marc just sat there smiling. And of course today, we know Bob Houlihan for the amazing leader in the green development industry that he is, and we celebrate him as our own fearless leader. Bob has led HVA as our president for the last four years.

Marc was right. Bob Houlihan is sensational.

Marc pushed, prodded, pulled and cheered us into collaborating. And at HVA at least, as these partnerships gelled, Marc had a knack of making you feel like it was all your doing. I think he got a kick of that, too.

One afternoon last spring, we were on the ninth day of a ten day down-river Source to Sound Paddle adventure on the Housatonic. We had made this trip years before, connecting along the way with about a dozen partner organizations, and we wanted to do it again. This time we had happily stolen River Network's "River Hero" concept, and we were shamelessly bestowing "Housatonic River Hero" awards on our partners – town leaders, businesses leaders, sister organizations – at riverside celebrations as we made our way down the river. On this particular afternoon, we were celebrating at Kettletown State Park in Southbury with several of Marc's beloved organizations – the Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition, the Southbury Land Trust, Trout Unlimited – and I realized as I dug in the box for the awards that we had handed out 75 Housatonic River Hero awards to date. Well, I hurried over to Marc, and I said "Marc! Guess what! We've handed out 75 awards and counting! isn't it great! I mean, just look at all the partners HVA has! why we have a veritable army of river defenders!".....and as I babbled on, I realized...way too late.....that I was actually speaking with the architect of many of those partnerships.

Marc must have seen something on my face. Because he just stood there, arm around Jan, beaming at me. And he said "Lynn, I think what you all have done is sensational."

Jan, we are deeply indebted to you for sharing Marc with us so selflessly for so long.

And I know that each of us will miss Marc deeply and in countless ways in the weeks and years to come.

But I also know that Marc's legacy to us – the deep, rich connections that we have with each other – will sustain us through the sad times and keep us strong together in our shared dream of healthy rivers and streams.

And it is this gift from Marc, and that great smile, that, even on this saddest of days, makes me feel – just a little bit – sensational.