



Henry David Thoreau once quipped that “We can never have enough nature.” It is clear that Ken Gober took those words to heart, whether consciously or unconsciously, from the moment he stepped onto the Colgate University Campus in 1972, until and after his retirement in 2008 from leading the Rocky River Nature Center, in one of the most beloved and most visited location in the Cleveland Metroparks, the Rocky River Reservation.

During his LHS years, Ken was the quintessential high achiever, immersing himself in multi-season sports, student council, several choirs, Spanish Club, Journalism Society, National Honor Society, as newspaper photo editor and more. Ken went on to earn a B.A. in Biology from Colgate University specializing in Field Biology. Upon graduation, he returned to Northeast Ohio and began his career as a Volunteer Naturalist at both the Rocky River and North Chagrin Nature Centers. In less than a year, Ken was promoted to full-time Naturalist in both locations. Ken continued to make an impact on the

Cleveland Metroparks when he was promoted to Manager of the Rocky River Nature Center and remained in that position for the next twenty-five years.

During his time as Manager, Ken found time to earn his Master of Science from The Ohio State University School of Natural Resources in Environmental Interpretation/Parks and Recreation, earn his Certified Interpretive Guide credentials and play a major role in the two and a half million-dollar renovation and expansion of the Rocky River Nature Center in 2000, including a complete exhibit redesign and addition of 7000 square feet of educational, work and storage spaces. In addition, Ken was an integral part of developing new interpretive plans and nature centers in the Metroparks’ North Chagrin and Garfield Reservations.

The high regard in which Ken is held locally also extends to him nationally. Ken is a founding member of the National Association for Interpretation (NAI), chaired and co-chaired a variety of national and regional committees and presented at numerous workshops and training institutes. An avid birder and nature photographer since 1998, Ken has coordinated and kept records for the largest and longest-running series of organized bird walks co-sponsored by the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland, originating in 1934. He has served as an onboard naturalist for several Alaska cruises as well.

Ken has been honored for his work with the National Association for Interpretation (NAI) Great Lakes Region 4 Distinguished Professional Interpreter award (2002), National Master Interpretive Manager award (2002), Great Lakes Region 4 Meritorious Service award (2004) and two Outstanding Senior/Retired Interpreter awards at both the Regional and National levels (2015 & 2016).

His scholarship and sense of adventure has extended to areas outside of his career as well. Ken has studied ancient Egyptian art in Egypt, tropical Ecology in Jamaica and Northwoods Ecology in Canada and has honed his skills in wilderness backpacking and canoeing in backcountry areas throughout North America, including more than twenty-five trips to Alaska.

Ken retired in 2008 but continues to be active in his field as well as pursue a variety of hobbies. According to the famous Naturalist, John Muir, ‘In every walk with nature, one receives far more than what he seeks.’ While Ken has clearly received much from his career, his colleagues will tell you that his passion, integrity, kindness and his lifetime commitment to sustainability and connecting people to nature through education and experiences has made a significant impact in the lives of countless others.