



Story County Conservation Board - McFarland Park 56461 180th St. - Ames, Iowa 50010-9451
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www.storycountyconservation.org

Memorandum

To: Story County Conservation Board
Through: Michael D. Cox, Director
From: Danny Simcox, Park Ranger
Date: May 6, 2021
Re: Consideration of a memorial bench to be installed at TELC.

The family of Jack and Evelyn Smith would like to sponsor a memorial bench to be placed at the Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor (TELC). Jack and Evelyn once owned a portion of the stream corridor at TELC and built/lived in the 2919 residence on S. Riverside. They loved nature, their community, and Jack was particularly fond of walnuts.

The bench will be constructed of milled walnut lumber, to match the other benches in the park. The lumber selected for the bench came from an uprooted tree that Jack had likely once planted along the streambank, and the completed bench will be placed on land that Jack and Evelyn likely owned.

The family has provided a generous donation of \$2,000 for staff to have the walnut slabs (and other milled lumber) professionally surfaced in order to keep staff labor costs to a minimum.

Staff recommends your approval.

Approval

Disapproval

Date

Date

SMITH MEMORIAL BENCH PROPOSAL

Type of memorial (tree plantings, park amenities, landscaping): Live-edge walnut slab bench

Proposed park/placement location within the park: On the east side of the filterpaved boardwalk trail, approximately 20 feet north of the concrete trail.

Detailed description/drawing of proposed memorial or plaque, including size, shape, color, and wording of any inscriptions (may be attached):

Proposed text for a small memorial plaque: *“In loving memory of Jack and Evelyn Smith who called this land home from 1967 to 2015”*

Specific justification for the memorial, including:

Suitability:

Jack and Evelyn Smith owned roughly half of the stream corridor which is now the Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor, and in the 1960's they built the home at 2919 S. Riverside which is now the Ranger Residence. This land was an open pasture when they purchased it, with only a single tree on it. Jack loved the land, and over the years worked to improve it by planting numerous trees of various kinds, including many walnut trees, as he loved walnuts. He also worked with the county to address serious drainage issues, which resulted in the flooding of their home in the 1980's. Evelyn planted flowers and flowering bushes and made improvements to attract birds and other wildlife. The proposed memorial bench is to be constructed from walnut slabs almost certainly from a tree that Jack planted, which came down in 2017. It will blend nicely with other similar benches in the park. Jack and Evelyn would both have been so very pleased to know that this land will continue to provide joy and inspiration to others as it did for them.

History or biography of the group or individual to be honored:

Jack Smith skipped two grade levels in school and lied about his age to enlist in the US Navy when he graduated from high school at age 16, just as WWII was looming. In the Navy Jack became a decorated fighter pilot in the Pacific theater where his aircraft carrier, the USS Suwannee, had the dubious distinction of being the first US vessel to suffer a Kamikaze attack. After his retirement, Jack described that attack and many other fascinating wartime events in a popular book he authored entitled *“Hellcats over the Philippine Deep”*. After the war, in 1948 Jack and his new wife, Evelyn, moved to Pammel Court in Ames to pursue his education at what was then Iowa State College. After graduating with a Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry, Jack stayed on as a professor at Iowa State and a researcher at the Ames Laboratory, later becoming Chairman of the ISU Metallurgy Department and an Ames Laboratory Research Group Leader, achieving an international reputation as a widely published author and speaker in his field. Jack continued to teach and perform research at ISU and Ames lab until his retirement in 1989. Jack's love of flying caused him to spend countless hours at the Ames airport. Over the years, he owned several aircraft, some were antiques that he painstakingly restored with a group of fellow aviation enthusiasts, with much of the work done in the T-hangers on the west side of the Ames airport. Jack eventually purchased the land across the road from the T-hangers to build a home close to the flying that he loved so much. Friends from around the state would fly into the Ames

airport, park at the T-hangers, and walk across the road to enjoy some coffee and “hanger flying” conversation with Jack and Evelyn. Jack’s son Mark was a flight instructor at the Ames airport for many years and served as the Ames airport manager in the mid-1970’s. Jack’s daughter, Letitia, and her husband, Steve Harder, built their home across the stream from Jack’s house (the other home on the east end of the learning corridor). Evelyn passed away in 1994 and Jack in 2015. The estate sold the land and both homes to the ISU Foundation, which joined with Story County and others to create the Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor.

Rationale for honoring the individual, organization or act: development and placement of the plaque or memorial.

To the best of our knowledge, the proposed bench location will be on land that Jack and Evelyn once owned. It will be constructed from walnut slabs that were milled from a tree that was uprooted along the TELC streambank shortly after Ranger Simcox moved in to the 2919 Residence. This tree was almost certainly planted by Jack. Also, the proposed location of the bench on the East end of the park will help fill a void in the development of that area, providing an additional resting spot and scenic view of the prairie, bridge and stream.

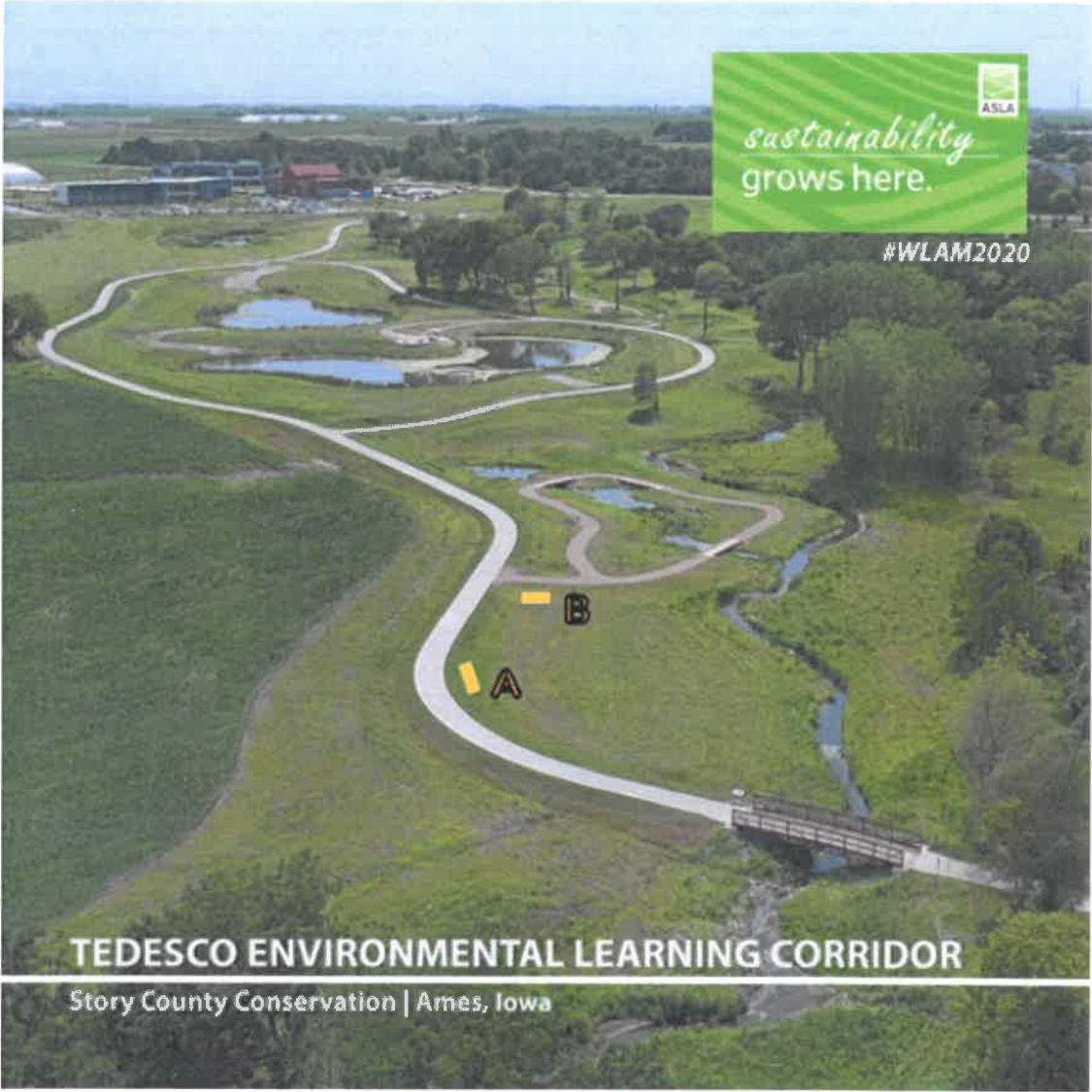
Note: The proposed bench location is signified as option “B” on the TELC photo provided. The bench will be facing ENE, away from the trail, overlooking the mesic, shortgrass prairie.

In lieu of paying for a manufactured bench, the family of Jack and Evelyn Smith has graciously donated \$2,000 to allow staff to get a good portion of SCC’s milled hardwood lumber professionally surfaced, which will save staff many hours of surfacing the slabs in-house, with much less-effective equipment.

Please address the person’s character, reputation, standing within the community or level of contribution to conservation or the community as a whole.

Jack and Evelyn Smith gave freely of time, talents, and treasure to serve others. They both came from humble backgrounds, and after achieving some personal success, they felt an obligation to give back; for example, establishing an endowed scholarship at ISU and working to support various youth activities. They were active in the ISU community and also in their church. They were modest people who generally preferred to stay out of the limelight, but eager to step in and help others in various ways. Over the years, Jack was instrumental in starting an active Civil Air Patrol (CAP) group at the Ames airport to introduce young men and women to the joys of flying. This CAP group also served as a volunteer search and rescue resource for the community, with annual readiness training exercises. Jack was also a key founding member of the Silent Knights Soaring Club that provided free flight training to young people who weren’t yet old enough to get a powered aircraft pilot’s license, but were old enough to qualify for a glider pilot’s license. The CAP and Silent Knights were fixtures at the Ames Airport for many years, enriching the lives of numerous people, both youth and adults. In the late 60’s and early 70’s, there were only about a dozen residences on this two-mile section of South Riverside Drive, but they considered themselves a close-knit neighborhood. At that time, the wives of these households organized a social group called the ‘Might Like Us’ club. It was, first and foremost, an excuse to get together and catch up with each other, but they also put a lot of time and effort into sponsoring and supporting community events and fundraisers. Evelyn always looked forward to her turn hosting their monthly meeting and suggesting projects to support, including ways to get books into the hands of children, which was a lifelong passion for her. Jack and Evelyn loved nature, and they especially enjoyed the many varieties of birds and other wildlife that frequented the stream and wooded land around their South Riverside home. As noted in an earlier section, Jack and Evelyn made improvements to this land to create a natural refuge for wildlife. Despite numerous

requests, Jack would never allow hunters on the land. Jack and Evelyn were both laid to rest in the ISU cemetery. Permission to be buried in this small cemetery with limited space is a privilege granted only to those with strong ties to the university community.



sustainability
grows here.



#WLAM2020

TEDESCO ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CORRIDOR

Story County Conservation | Ames, Iowa

April 13, 2021

Attn: Mary Ann
Story County Conservation Commission
McFarland Park
56461 180th Street
Ames, Iowa 50010

Dear Mary Ann:

I have been working with Danny Simcox regarding a memorial bench for my parents, Jack and Evelyn Smith, who owned and lived on land that makes up roughly the eastern half of what is now the Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor. My folks purchased the land in 1967, built their home at 2919 South Riverside Dr. (the home Danny currently lives in) and lived there until my father passed in 2015. My mother and father loved that land and did much to improve it, planting numerous trees and flowering bushes, addressing drainage issues, etc. They would be *so very pleased* to see it as an environmental park today.

Danny has offered to build a live-edge walnut bench using planks cut from a tree that I am nearly certain was planted by my father, that tree came down in 2017. The bench is similar to others already installed in the park and should blend in nicely. I told Danny that my sister and I would provide a donation of \$2000 to cover the costs of building and installing the memorial bench (including concrete pad, etc.). Please find enclosed a check for that amount. If there is money left over, please consider it an unrestricted donation to the Tedesco Corridor to be used to support the park in some useful way. If additional funds are needed, please let me know, and my sister and I will accommodate.

I am working with Danny to provide the necessary paperwork for the memorial bench. I presume that it will be submitted through him. Please feel free to contact me if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,



Dr. Mark F. Smith
709 Vista Abajo Dr. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87123
Ph: 505-296-1908
Cell: 505-270-6316

Cc: Danny Simcox