# Watershed Observer



NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT LAND TRUST - VOLUME 31 No. 1 WINTER 2017

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### COMING UP ON THE CALENDAR

#### **FEBRUARY**

19 Sun. – Winter Hike at Double Oak (1:00–3:00pm)

#### **MARCH**

11 SAT – ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING & LUNCHEON (9:30 A.M.– 12:00 P.M.)

SEE MORE OF THE 2017 CALENDAR ON PAGE 10 OR ONLINE.

Visit Us Online at http://acltweb.org/nl

# As Parkers Creek Preserve matures, what will it be like?

In our first 30 years, ACLT has made great progress in protecting and managing land in the Parkers Creek Preserve and making it available for the public to enjoy. In the next thirty years additional land preservation will be needed, but the bulk of land that we need to protect has already been conserved, either by ACLT, our partners, or landowners.

What is next? Trust members have always felt that we have a stewardship role to help sustain, restore, and identify threats to the ecological health of the Parkers Creek ecosystem.

What are the threats? Urban runoff from Prince Frederick is one of the top concerns. Impervious surfaces both starve streams of rainwater in dry years and provide heavy rushes of water that scour the stream banks and silt over habitat areas during even normal rainfalls. In the winter, parking lots and roads dump tons of salt into the waterways, increasing sodium and chloride in the water, which impacts the survival rate of many organisms.

In September, the Prince Frederick region experienced a 4+" rain, with most of it falling in a few hours. After the swollen creeks retreated below their banks, I scouted the trails along the branch of the creek nearest the eastern side of Prince Frederick. I was disappointed to find the creek banks covered in sediment. Need-

less to say, this was not a normal rainfall, but these types of storms are occurring more often. However, a healthy, protected tributary in the watershed could have absorbed this storm. This tributary of Parkers Creek did not.

As a land trust, we can urge developers to do a better job of maintaining their sediment control devices. We can urge our county and state agencies to check development sites more often and also urge that disturbed areas are properly stabilized before major storms. Even better, we can push for better design of site plans and subdivisions so that development does not occur where sediment control devices are destined to fail.

Other threats to the watershed include invasive flora and fauna, climate change and loss of habitat.

We should be able to address or mitigate some of these factors while others are out of our control.

So what role can we play in the Parkers Creek Preserve, and Calvert County as a whole? First, our Science Committee has begun to develop baselines, as you will learn from other articles in this newsletter. Then we will need to develop a monitoring system and educate and advocate for good stewardship of this and other watersheds. Over the next 30 years, we can help a community culture that actively cares for its watersheds.



Sediment in Creek

Greg Bowen, Executive Director



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Published quarterly by the American Chestnut Land Trust. The ACLT is dedicated to the preservation of Calvert County, Maryland's Natural and Historical Resources. Since it was established in 1986, ACLT has preserved over 3,000 acres. We own 985 acres, manage 1,910 acres owned by the State of Maryland, and hold conservation easements on 374 privately-owned acres.

Editors: Ellen and David Farr

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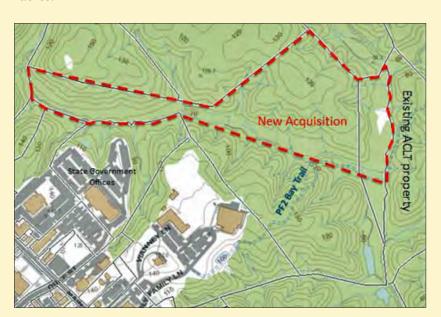
## **Around ACLT**

## **ACLT Acquires Property # 14!**

In August, ACLT purchased a second piece of property from St. John Vianney along the Prince Frederick to Bay (PF2Bay) Trail. At 21 acres, it is one of the smallest, but strategically it is it valuable.

The property is located along a portion of the PF2Bay trail. It is totally forested and streams run through it to Parkers Creek. Therefore, its purchase both protects the upper areas of the watershed and it provides a continuous band of forestland along a section of the PF2Bay Trail. Finally, it gives us another potential access point to the Trail via a state owned property—the state government offices at 200 Duke Street, Prince Frederick. See page 3 for more about the PF2Bay trail

This acquisition brings ACLT's total land holdings to 985.8 acres.



## Thank You for All You Do!

Your support, your attention, your time—in 2016
you gave so much to ACLT!
We're so grateful for your dedication as part of the
team that cares for the Parkers Creek and
Governors Run watersheds.
Thank you very, very much!

The American Chestnut Land Trust Staff: Greg, Pam, Autumn, Janel and Mike

## Take a Hike! Exploring ACLT's PF2Bay Trail

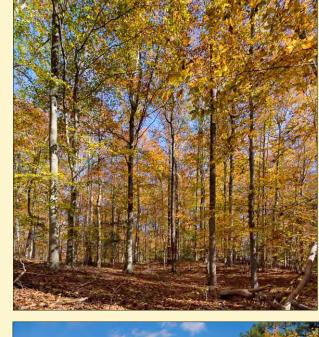
Get out and enjoy the land managed by the American Chestnut Land Trust.

November 2, 2013 was a lovely fall day, so ACLT members David and Ellen Farr decided to hike the newly opened PF2Bay trail. We hiked the round trip from the trailhead in the St. John Vianney parking lot to the intersection of the PF2Bay trail with the Parkers Creek Loop Trail at Double Oak Farm. The walk on the PF2Bay trail showcased the work of our volunteer bridge builders, the serenity of the forest, the colors of nature, mushrooms (Amanita and hedgehog) and insects (Buck Moth). David's photos from the hike accompany this article.

Maps for the ACLT hiking trails and trailhead locations can be found on the ACLT web site—http://acltweb.org.

The story of the construction of the PF2Bay was published on page 7 of the Fall 2013 issue of this newsletter. An archive of back issues can be found on the ACLT website under the "Newsletters" link on the home page.

Ellen Farr

















## A Season of Celebration!

Fall of 2016 was fun and busy, filled with gatherings for ACLT's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in addition to its excellent seasonal events! Much progress was made toward increasing awareness of ACLT's work and of thanking those who make it all possible

As this season of celebration wraps up we THANK YOU for being a part of it all - for your constant interest in ACLT projects and outreach;

for volunteering to help care for the Parkers Creek Preserve; and for your dedication to land conservation. These 30 years of achievements are because you and people like you have cared enough to get involved. Thank you so very

Pam Shilling Community Relations Coordinator

## **ACLT's Volunteer Appreciation and Birthday Bash**







Left: Ken Romney parties at the Birthday Bash. Center: Land Manager Autumn Phillips-Lewis visits with Board Member Emeritus, Carolyn Van Mason. Right: Food, fun and friendship at the birthday bash! Steve Kullen, Katy Bug and Mary Hollinger

## Holiday Wreath & Greens Week 2016







Left: Autumn Phillips-Lewis – Wreath Making Master. Center: Wreath making proved to be very popular with our twenty something friends as seen here by workshop participants Flora Brown, Amy Griffin, and Tammy Grover (right to left). Right: Ryan Tyrell with his wife, son and grandmother (not pictured) worked together to make wreaths for their family and ACLT.

# **Member Appreciation Day/Calvert County Farm Fest**





Left: ACLT featured on WMAR news to promote Calvert County Farm Fest Member Appreciation Day. Right: Young guests at ACLT Farm Fest learn about native turtles.

## Thank You 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration & Auction Sponsors!

The ACLT staff and board of directors extend their sincerest thanks to these businesses who once again demonstrated their dedication to land conservation and outreach by supporting our annual event.









## ACLT's 30th Anniversary Celebration and Auction

On November 19<sup>th</sup> ACLT marked a milestone with a wonderful evening filled by staff, volunteers, founders, board members, long-time supporters and friends at ACLT's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration & Auction.

This year ACLT's annual gathering included a delicious locally sourced meal created by Dream Weavers and excellent live music provided by the band "Some Assembly" as nearly 200 guests gathered to celebrate ACLT's 30<sup>th</sup>year. With the theme "Experience ACLT", the auction focused on offering attendees the chance to take part in fun experiences like visiting with the otters at Calvert Marine Museum, being the first guided hike on ACLT's new North/South Trail, and creating their own beer with the owners of a local brewery in addition to traditional auction items. More than 110 items and experiences meant there was something for everyone.

As a special addition to the evening, renowned, local expert Walter Boynton made brief remarks on the importance of groups like ACLT and their impact on the steadily improving health of the Chesapeake. His comments, in addition to Greg Bowen's recognition of ACLT founders and volunteers and Autumn Phillips-Lewis' view from the next generation, acknowledged 30 years of effort and determination with a look to the future. ACLT staff and board were also pleased to premiere a new promotional video featuring aerial footage of the Parkers Creek Preserve. This video is now available on ACLT's website at <a href="http://acltweb.org">http://acltweb.org</a>.

ACLT once again thanks the following people without whom this celebration would not have been possible: The



ACLT Board of Directors; the 2016 Auction Committee: Steve Kullen (Chair), Penny Moran, Robyn Truslow, Barbara Mogel, Connie Willoughby, and Marie Bundy-Estabrook; the many volunteers who assisted with day before and day of set up (especially Bob Field); and check-in and check-out volunteers including Peter Stathis, Anne White, Janel Young, Mike Molina and Reva Scheibner. We also offer a very special thank you to our high school volunteers Elizabeth Cristo, Dia Brown and Angela Arnold of "Crochet for the Bay", Hope Couto and Robert Fredericks. We truly treasure the ongoing partnerships with the following groups and individuals: St. John Vianney, Mrs. Mike Lewnes, Rose Thompson, Trish Weaver and the Dream Weaver Staff, Joe Klausner and the band "Some Assembly".

# Drone Video and Photography of the Parkers Creek Preserve

Earlier this year, our Community Relations Coordinator Pam Shilling attended a Leadership Southern Maryland event and returned with an idea. There, she had met Tony Pucciarella who has recently started ALARIS, Solutions for Unmanned Systems—specialists in drone technology. Tony is a retired Commander and Navy Pilot, with a background in manned and unmanned aviation. Pam and Tony discussed how drones could be used to update ACLT's photography database, and possibly add to video to our outreach resources. Several months later, we began a discussion to contract Tony for a drone flight.

The results of this collaboration are truly astounding photographs and cinema-quality aerial video footage taken on November 3, 2016—just as the leaves began to turn. Tony generously used his newest drone which offers 4k filming capabilities—the latest and most advanced film quality just now becoming available to the general public.

Just after sunrise, Tony began to navigate the drone over the bay, scanning the creek and the ACLT and DNR properties. Footage was also taken along Double Oak Road and at ACLT's North Side Trailhead/Double Oak Farm.

From the footage Pam was able to create a two minute promotional video that show-cases several long range aerial views of the Parkers Creek Preserve. The drone provided angles and perspectives of the property, and particularly of the creek, that would otherwise be impossible to enjoy.

Our sincerest thanks to Tony Pucciarella for his generosity. Visit *http://acltweb.org* to view the promotional video. For more information on ALARIS, LLC please visit TeamAlaris.com.

Check us out on Face-book. Become a fan of the

American Chestnut Land Trust today!
(http://www.facebook.com/pages/American-Chestnut-Land-Trust/250928382473?ref=ts)





Left: Tony Pucciarella from Alaris, LLC launches the drone just after sunrise above the Bay.

Right: Close up of the tablet used for navigation as the drone moves over Parkers Creek.



Aerial View of Parkers Creek, November 3, 2016



Aerial view of the land from ACLT's North Side Trailhead/Double Oak Farm to the Chesapeake Bay, November 3, 2016.

## What lurks beneath? Biodiversity in Parkers Creek

Being an avid angler, I have often pondered what dwells beneath the water surface. Having cast countless lures and baits, my hope has always been that the answer is fish. Yet, there is more to an ecosystem than what can be caught on a hook and line, more which needs to be explored and understood in depth. With the advent of ACLT's biodiversity monitoring initiative, the possibility of answering this question finally may be in sight.

In any study one must ask a plethora of questions in order to define the goals. When I was given the opportunity to work on this project for the ACLT, some obvious questions came to mind: Which species dwell in the creek? What is the most effective method for sampling a diversity of fish species? How can habitat characterization of the creek be utilized to compare variance in fish communities? However, what I find to be the fundamental question remains modest: Why is this important?

To me, this project is more than constructing a baseline for one ecosystem on the preserve. This project will also reinforce the magnitude of what the ACLT community has accomplished in terms of forest and watershed preservation while exposing if there is something we could be paying more attention to. Discovering what population structure there is beneath the surface of Parkers Creek will highlight how effective the land preservation has been, in addition to organizing where future conservation efforts should be focused. For example, if the results show low biomass and minimal diversity we can conclude there is some ecological imbalance, whether it is through polluted storm water runoff, invasive marsh vegetation, or some other disturbance. A benefit from discovering this information will be the ability to piece together an idea of what is causing the imbalance. We can then further implement management in that direction.

Another great benefit from this fish survey will be the building of a foundation to guide future monitoring, as it has not yet been done to date. In spite of this, there is a rich history of fishing based out of Parkers Creek that dates back to the early 20th century. Records show that a small pound net operation located on the beach near the mouth of the creek sustained several families of the Scientists Cliffs community (Fleischhauer, 2005). This operation was a way of life, especially when other trades were out of season or not providing. In this time period, however, these watermen did not have worries of declining water quality and decimated wild populations. How the times have since changed as we currently deal with ongoing degradation in our ecosystems. Fishing nets will still be used on Parkers Creek, but this time it is for a measurement of health. What we pull up will no longer fill a plate, but instead a data book that will help focus our future management efforts. It is evident that fishing provided for the local community in terms of sustenance throughout the past. Now, it is time to see how fishing can

provide for the community in terms of stewardship.

So far, work on the project has included researching techniques, practicing said techniques, surveying the creek for sampling sites and bottom structure, and meeting



Pound net operation located near the creek mouth, circa 1950.

with experts in the field of ichthyology. A total of 12 sites will be surveyed in order to effectively sample the length of the creek as well as gain an idea of what differences there may be along the salinity gradient and varying marsh habitat. On top of this, trials have shown that com-

bining various sampling techniques will provide the most comprehensive dataset as each method has unavoidable flaws that result from its procedure. Seine netting in a muddy creek is a prolonged effort and therefore many species are quick to escape. Fish traps reduce the chance of escape, but do not cover a large area of water. A sys-



CCC Member Mike Molina wades through the creek to determine site placement

tematic combination of techniques will generate a method for reducing gaps in data that would otherwise occur from employing a single technique.

From these preliminary tests, we have discovered a variety of forage fish and young of year, juvenile blue crabs, and grass shrimp. These species are indicative of a healthy ecosystem and trophic web and reveal that this project is worth undertaking. With the dedicated support from local fisheries experts paired with constant devotion from the ACLT's volunteer corps, this fish survey will be a strong step toward a productive future in monitoring the Parkers Creek Watershed.

Mike Molina Chesapeake Conservation Corps Member

Works Cited

Fleischhauer, Carl. "Statement of Historical Context and Significance Regarding Selected Warriors Rest Cultural Resources." March 2005.

## Land Manager's Corner

## Establishing a Watershed Baseline

The land preservation efforts that have occurred around Parkers Creek have made it one of the most protected watersheds in the state of Maryland. Roughly 53% of the land in the watershed is in some sort of land preservation program, it is comprised of over 70% forested land, and it has less than 3% impervious surface. Pretty incredible for a watershed that contains a good portion of the town of Prince Frederick.

The land within the Parkers Creek watershed has not only been preserved but actively managed as it has been acquired piece by piece over the last 30 years. Land managers have done their best to constantly focus land management efforts on what we believe are the most pressing threats to the ecosystems within the Parkers Creek Preserve. Volunteers and staff have done as much as they could with the resources that have been available to them, but how do we know if the Parkers Creek watershed is as healthy as we hope and think it is? How do we know if there are areas where we are not doing well enough? And if we focus efforts on improving a certain aspect of an ecosystem, how do we know if our efforts are bringing results?

As has been mentioned in recent newsletter articles, the ACLT Board of Directors formed a Science Committee whose objective is to provide advice to the Board and staff that will help ACLT protect, restore, and identify threats to the ecological integrity of the Parkers Creek ecosystem. At its very first meeting, the Science Committee decided that the first step to determining where management efforts should be focused was to develop a baseline to assess the current status of the ecosystems within the Parkers Creek Preserve. In addition to telling us where we need to focus more stewardship effort, this baseline data would allow us to see any changes that were occurring over time due to things such as shifting land management efforts or climate change.

## **Collecting the Data**

Once the Science Committee decided the necessary first step was to establish baselines, ACLT staff has been talking with experts in the fields of forestry, water quality monitoring, stream restoration, and tidal creek diversity sampling, as well as looking at surveys of bird, insect, reptile, and amphibian diversity that have been completed in the past.

## **Water Quality**

ACLT volunteers have been collecting water quality data at multiple locations along Parkers Creek since 1998. This data is by far our most extensive and complete dataset with which to move forward. In addition to the traditional parameters we have been using to monitor water quality such as particulate carbon and nitrogen, chlorophyll a, and total suspended solids, we are also developing a protocol to survey the fish diversity in Parkers Creek. This project

will be spearheaded by ACLT Chesapeake Conservation Corps member Mike Molina and is discussed in detail in his article in this newsletter. The data collected from this stream survey will show the diversity of fish species present in Parkers Creek which will indicate both water quality as well as the quality of other features within the ecosystem that determine the quality of wildlife habitat, such as breeding habitat and food sources.

### **Birds**

The ACLT archives also have data from some bird surveys that were completed by ACLT members who are also members of the Maryland Ornithological Society. Their annual spring and fall bird counts have given a baseline of some of the species that have



been found in a few locations on the properties managed by ACLT. We have the results of the surveys that have been completed since 2006 on file at ACLT. By looking at the survey results from the last 10 years, we can see how bird populations have changed or stayed the same during that time and also use the collective data as a long-term baseline to compare to bird species that are found here in the future.



ACLT volunteer takes water sample as part of the monthly Water Quality Monitoring.

The Parkers Creek Preserve is a designated Important Bird Area (IBA) and is the only place with this designation in all of Calvert County. An IBA is a site that has excellent habitat value and plays an essential role in hosting birds, whether for breeding, migrating, or over-wintering. In the spring of 2017, ACLT hopes to train volunteers to help with monitoring bird diversity in the Parkers Creek Preserve following the same protocol that is used in other IBAs in Maryland and Washington D.C. through their IBA Champions monitoring program. This data will help augment data that has been collected over the past 10 years and provide a method that will remain consistent over time and allow us to compare changes in our data to other IBAs around the region.

### **Forest Diversity**

Yet another ecosystem that we need to establish baseline data for is our forests. We have met with experts from the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center to learn how they sample tree diversity in their research plots all over the world. In order to accomplish the goals that ACLT has outlined for establishing a diversity baseline, we have decided to set up a few small plots that represent all of the forested ecosystems in the Parkers Creek Preserve. Volunteers will then help survey what species are present and the number of each species so that we can see how they change over time in response to ecological threats or climate change. We may also have local experts walk transects through large tracts of forested land to look specifically at how their populations change in the future.

# Insects, Reptiles, and Amphibians, Oh My!

To round out our initial baseline efforts, we will also be looking into our insects, reptiles, and amphibians. Past studies have been done on each of these groups and their data can be compared to any data that is gathered from studies done now or in the future. The Science Committee will now need to examine the protocols used in these studies to determine whether to use them or modify them to use in future monitoring efforts.



Bee on Maryland Golden-aster. Photo by ACLT Staff.

Autumn Phillips-Lewis Land Manager, ACLT



Trees regenerating in an old farm field in the Parkers Creek. Preserve. Photo by ACLT Staff.



# Become a Master Naturalist!

Now Registering for ACLT's 2017 Class

### Share your love of nature! A

"Master Naturalist" is a citizen scientist who is dedicated to the care and conservation of Maryland's natural environment. Certified Master Naturalists can share their expertise, participate in research, and guide hikes and canoe trips.

Classes are Monday nights from 6-9pm from February 27<sup>th</sup> through June 12<sup>th</sup>. There will also be three Saturday fieldtrips on May 6, May 20, and June 3.

Applications can be downloaded from our website at acltweb.org . For more information, contact Autumn Phillips-Lewis at landmanager@acltweb.org.



## American Chestnut Land Trust

## Calendar of Events January-August 2017

### **February**

19 Sun. – Winter Hike at Double Oak (1:00–3:00pm)

#### March

11 Sat – Annual Membership Meeting & Luncheon (9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.)

18 Sat – Water Quality Monitoring Training (9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.)

25 Sat – Spring Hiking Trail Maintenance Day (9:00 a.m.– 12:00pm, picnic lunch)

### April

22 Sat – Earth Day 5K Trail Run (Check In: 8:00 a.m.; Run Start: 9:00 a.m., hikers to follow) 23 Sun – Earth Day Clean Up (12:00pm–3:00 p.m.) 30 Sun – Spring Guided Family Hike (1:00pm 3:00 p.m.)

#### May

6 Sat – Canoe Guide Training (11:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.) (Sunday Rain Date) 20 Sat – Guided Canoe Trip (10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.) (Sunday Rain Date)

#### **June**

4 Sun – Mountain Laurel Hike (1:00–3:00 p.m.) (tentativedepending on bloom) 11 Sun – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Farmers Market–Family Day (1:004:00 p.m.)

17 Sat - Guided Canoe Trip (9:00 -12:00 a.m.) (Sunday Rain Date)

### July

9 Sun – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Farmers Market (1:00pm–4:00 p.m.) 15 Sat – SUNRISE Guided Canoe Trip (6:00 a.m.–9:00 a.m.) (Sunday Rain Date)

### August

12 Sat – SUNSET Canoe Trip (6:00–9:00 p.m.) (No Rain Date) 13 Sun – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Farmers Market (1:00–4:00 p.m.)

## Thank you for your support ...

### **New Members**

ACLT would like to welcome the following new members since the Fall 2016 newsletter:

Mr. David Allen

Mr. & Mrs. Phil Anderson

Ms. Stacia Aylward

Ms. Barbara Burnett

Mr. Peter Cottrell

Ms. Barbara Delaney

Mr. Albert Engel

Ms. Jeanette Kaufmann

Mr. Michael Mashino

Mr. David Morrow

Mr. John Reed

Mr. & Mrs. Mark Seibert

Mr. & Mrs. John Wahl

Mr. John White

Mr. John Wolf

# In Memory of Contributions

Thank you to the following members who made a memorial contribution since our last newsletter:

In memory of **Mr. Alan E. Wilson** who was a Sustaining Member, a dedicated volunteer and longtime supporter. Alan served on the Board of Directors and on numerous committees throughout the years:

Ms. Virginia Ayres

Ms. Joy Bartholomew

& Mr. Mark Edmondson

Col. Daniel Boesz, USAF (Ret.)

Drs. Judith & Donald Dahmann

Mr. & Mrs. Paul Dennett

Mrs. Mary Dwan

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Yuill

# In Honor of Contributions

Thank you to the following donor who made an "in honor of" contribution since our last newsletter:

In honor of Ms. Marcia van Gemert who is a dedicated supporter and longtime member:

Mrs. Ruth Mora

## **Gift Memberships**

Thank you to the following members who gave a gift membership since the last newsletter:

Ms. Joy Bartholomew

& Mr. Mark Edmondson

Ms. Marsha Berry

Mr. & Mrs. Patrick Griffin

Ms. Sue Hamilton

Col. Daniel Boesz, USAF (Ret.)

## **Auction Angels**

Mr. Louis Amtmann

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& Ms. Margo Coffin Groff

Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Cloak

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Mr. & Mrs. Patrick Griffin

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Ms. Cheryl Place

Mr. Norman Prince

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Mr. Todd Sheldon & Ms. Mary McGahey

Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Steller

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## 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

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