

Wild Times Standing in the Storm

by Joe Foy

Sometime between Christmas and the New Year, when one too many cookies has been eaten, one too many jokes told, I'll hole up somewhere alone, warm and quiet to reflect on times past.

This Christmas season I savoured the bittersweet memories of Eugene Rogers.

I first met Eugene in the early eighties. He was a hunting and fishing kind of fellow, about forty years old or so. He lived in New Westminster. I met him at a meeting in the local library, where I had come to learn about efforts to save the Stein Valley from proposed logging. I was real green back then – and I don't mean Green Party, I mean greenhorn. When it came to saving wild places I didn't know "shit from putty," as my grandfather used to say.



Betty Krawczyk receiving the 2004 Eugene Rogers Award.

Eugene didn't care about how little I knew. He was happy to hear that I'd hiked the length of the Stein River and he was happy to answer all of my greenhorn questions about how we were going to save the place. Upon reflection, I realise that Eugene was one of those most responsible for bringing me into the environment movement. This is funny because Eugene wasn't really a movement kind of guy. While he volunteered countless hours for groups like the Save the Stein Coalition, the Steelhead Society, BC Wildlife Federation, and Outdoor Recreation Council, Eugene still liked to do much of his work alone. He was a

determined researcher and a brave fellow who would stand his ground in the face of the most daunting odds.

I used to imagine Eugene, fishing a river somewhere back of beyond, rain pelting down, cold wind pushing him. And Eugene standing strong in the teeth of the storm. All alone. A true gumboot activist.

So it was a hell of a shock when we learned in January of '92 that Eugene had taken his own life. Why did he do it? I don't know and probably will never know.

A bunch of us at the Wilderness Committee got together and kicked around some ideas about what Eugene meant to us as a friend and as a mentor. We came up with the idea of presenting an award to someone who had stood alone in the defence of nature, as all environmental activists must do from time to time. For a while at least, they could be surrounded by the warmth and admiration of friends.

And so was born the Eugene Rogers Award.

As we head into 2007, I'd like to list for you its past recipients – home-grown heroes every one.

All the best for the coming year. And if perchance you find yourself alone in the storm defending a wild valley, river, lake, ocean, creature, or tree – please remember to take shelter from time to time in the company of friends.



Telálsemkin Siyám (Chief Bill Williams) receiving the 2005 Eugene Rogers Award

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Past recipients of the Eugene Rogers Award

1992 Terry Jacks with Environmental Watch of the Sunshine Coast for his work to stop pulp mill pollution in Howe Sound.

1993 - Joe Martin from the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council in Clayoquot Sound for his work to protect Clayoquot Sound.

1994 - Ocean Hellman and Doug Radies of the Cariboo Mountains Wilderness Coalition for their work to protect the Cariboo Mountains.

1995 - Danny Gerak, commercial fisher and fishing lodge owner, with the help and support of his family and the Katzie First Nation, has been a tireless defender of the fish and wildlife habitat of the Upper Pitt River Valley.

1996 - Maureen Fraser, small business owner, for her persistence and strength at the community level to help in the progress towards preservation of the ancient rainforests in Clayoquot Sound.

1997 - John Clarke, mountaineer, for his work to bring hundreds of people into the Stoltmann Wilderness to see what might be lost if preservation does not prevail. John passed away in January 2003.

1998 - Marion Parker, dendrochronologist, for his life-long efforts at ancient tree research in British Columbia. Marion passed away in early August 1999.

1999 - Will Koop for his work to protect Vancouver's Drinking Watersheds.

2000 - Will Paulik for his unfaltering work in helping protect the Fraser River. Will passed away January 2, 2001.

2001 - Mae Burrows for her outstanding work in the environmental and labour movements, including building bridges between workers and environmentalists.

2002 - Ruth Masters for her tireless work on environmental issues, including preserving Strathcona Park, BC's oldest provincial park.

2003 - Clint Marvin for his effort's to preserve and protect the Fraser Valley's tallest trees in the Elk Creek Rainforest.

2004 - Betty Krawczyk for her courageous work to safeguard public lands, conserve ancient forests, and defend a citizen's right to protest unjust laws without undue government harassment.

2005 - Telálsemkin Siyám (Chief Bill Williams) for his work to protect the Squamish Nation's Kwa kwayex welh-aynexws (Wild Spirit Places).

2006 - Dr. Tracy Lyster, for her work to protect the salmon streams and rural landscape of Mission.



Joe Foy is Campaign Director for the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, Canada's largest citizen-funded membership based wilderness preservation organization. WCWC currently has 28,000 members from coast to coast.



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