



A family passion for conservation

Norm Godfrey and Megan Loneragan

“Dad loved nature. He was attuned to it and devoted to protecting it”

Can you tell me a bit about your dad? What sort of fella was he and why was he so passionate about conservation?

“I think dad’s always loved nature. He’s always said there were too many people in the world and not enough animals. As far back as I can remember he’s always been active in the area of regeneration of anything basically. In the early days I remember him collecting grass trees with a group he was involved with. They collected trees that were being cleared for roads and then looked after them, selling them back for landscaping et cetera to the various councils. That was in the really early days.”

“Then he started growing trees. We had quite a large backyard divided into two sections. The back section was just full of trees. All baby trees all in little plastic pots. Every now and again we’d chuck them in the back of the trailer, and off we’d go to help plant them out somewhere in the Perth hills, or anywhere around the circumference of the Perth city. We were all fairly well involved. We were always in dirty jeans and jumpers and boots.”

What a wonderful way to spend your childhood.

“Yeah. We lived at Margaret River for my mid primary school years, we’d do things like just go and roll down the sand hills. We’d go to the caves along the Margaret River coast. That was great fun. When Dad retired, he moved to Denmark on the south coast. That’s when he got involved with a group down there that were surveying the natural fauna as well as the flora.”

“He and some friends from his early years formed a group and started to document what was down on the south coast. They were the first group to do that. Trapping animals and tagging them, then letting them go. Seeing where they went. That was his first foray into being concerned for the full ecosystem, not just the plant life.”



What was his inspiration, what inspired him to do all this work for the environment and the wildlife?

“I think it was just that he loved nature. He loved birds. He could hear nature. He was attuned to it.

My dad always worked hard, that came from his mom. A day wasn’t worth living unless there was something to show for it. I think that was instilled in dad. He wasn’t a person to sit around and have a chat for hours and hours. You’d have to go along with him, putting in a plant, nipping bits off, and talk along the way.”

“He’s an agricultural scientist by training, so he did have a scientific background, and a way of looking at problem solving in a scientific way. He was always doing plant trials and regeneration experiments.”

At what stage did he get involved with WWF?

“That’s coincidental that we both appreciated the same organisation. He belonged to other things too, he contributed to the Conservation Council of WA, and the Wilderness Society. I think he felt with WWF, there was personal communication, and projects that he could be involved in and informed about – something very pragmatic, something that he could do, for a good reason, not just something general. I think that’s what spurred him on. It’s certainly what spurs me on too. I think, “Yeah, I know what’s happening with the money. I can say what I want my money to go to.”

“We did have a joke at his 80th celebrations about all our inheritance going towards the rock-wallaby. I said “We’re quite happy, because they’re definitely cuter than us.”

“It was a living legacy, in his final years really.”

What made you choose to support and leave a bequest to WWF?

“It’s a well-run organisation. It’s international and picks quite practical things to do. It’s not too general. I think, ‘Okay, it’s not a general wishy washy, there’s definite projects that we are going to be doing’. And it’s scientifically based. Conservation staff like Merrill Halley are qualified to go out there and organise proper surveys or interventions. I think that’s what attracts me... I’m a scientist too.”

Are there any other areas of WWF’s work that you would really like to see your bequest to go towards - anything that you’re particularly passionate about saving?

“Anything that’s local, but also the Great Barrier Reef, I think every Australian is quite proud of it, and saddened to see it deteriorating. It doesn’t matter that it’s all miles away over here, you still think that’s your Barrier Reef.”

Your dad passed on that love of nature to you, have you been able to pass on that same passion to your kids?

“My middle daughter is living in an area that was once banksia woodland and still has quendas and other small animals visiting. She helps them feed their young from the fruit trees and keeps the cars and dogs away. My son is studying environmental science at Murdoch University. The youngest one, she’s got her own camping equipment, she’s a camping expert that girl. I think all three of them are.”

“I think dad’s legacy will continue. I mean, he was always very quiet about a lot of things but we know that he was happiest when he came back filthy dirty. I’ve got his work boots here to remind me. I’ve got them as my souvenir. My sister’s got his hat, and my other sister has got his secateurs on a leather belt. We’ve all got a bit of dad’s wetlands work equipment, to remind us.”

What would you say to someone who was thinking about making a bequest to WWF?

“I think it’s money well donated. It’s going to be put to a good practical use for the projects that will make a difference to the wildlife or the natural ecosystems, where ever they go. It’s an excellent organisation. I really trust that money is well looked after, and used with good research and knowledge behind it in the best way.”