

COMING TO LAKE ANNE

By William Nicoson

In the beginning there was Lake Anne.

The building of Reston started there with a seamless match of residential and commercial structures opening upon pathways and a plaza on the shores of a man-made lake, free of automobiles, overhead cables, and platitudinous architecture. In defiance of economic rules, founder Bob Simon erected in his newly-acquired wilderness a residential tower named Heron House, thrusting upward above his lake to mark then and now the site of an audacious new discipline in community building which joined aesthetics to the traditional planning goals of residential convenience and economic feasibility.

To walk on pathways around Lake Anne, however often, raises the spirit. Trees, plantings and structures, set against the lake, offer an infinite variety of genial visual rewards. We take pleasure in our surroundings, usually without analyzing how planners and architects offered these gifts. Once a year, on New Year's day, I chart a half-hour walk designed solely to find new delight in the setting composed by Bob Simon's professionals and to celebrate their artistry which I take for granted the rest of the time. I'm not alone. I've seen the light in the eyes of other pathway enthusiasts. And I've seen the many groups of professionals from around the world who invade Lake Anne to experience its style and learn its secrets.

There is now an organization, headquartered in Lake Anne Village Center, which has studied the joys of discovering Reston on foot and offers walking tours planned for residents, tourists and development professionals alike. The Reston Historic Trust for Community Revitalization in 1997 established a museum at the Center to commemorate the history of Reston's development and management. The Trust offers a wide array of events and information (receptions, discussions, lectures, exhibitions and publications). It's professionally managed by Executive Director Sarah Larson with the help of boards of directors and advisers led by Susann Gerstein. It offers prospective volunteers the pleasure of community service which both celebrates and engenders community spirit.

Early this year another valuable community undertaking will take root in Lake Anne Village Center. The Learning in Retirement Institute at George Mason University will sponsor a wide variety of courses at the Washington Plaza Baptist Church during a four-week Winter term beginning January 18. Though Winter registration is now closed, an 8-week term will follow in the Spring. For a membership fee of \$200, a student of 55 or more years may enroll for any of the courses offered in daytime hours. If you've always wanted to learn more about such subjects as "Investment ABCs", "Julius Caesar", or Russian literature, here's your chance.

Restonians played a critical role in creating LRI in 1991 as well as bringing it to Reston in 1999. Del. Ken Plum (D-36th) helped put the organization together as director of adult education for

Fairfax County Public Schools and has taught history, government, politics and tourism at LRI. Jane Wilhelm was also among the founding teachers, offering “The Philosophy of Religion”. Lydia Macdonald, an early LRI student, has led the movement to extend its reach into Lake Anne, and Stuart Macdonald is teaching a class I’ll attend there this term on the news media. I hope in some future term to soak up Jane Wilhelm’s philosophical wisdom after walking to class along the lake-side paths she helped Bob Simon build.

LRI’s outreach to Lake Anne in 1999 may well be emulated by the Reston Community Center later in the year. RCC’s Board of Governors has approved a business plan for establishing a variety of programs in some 8,300 sq. ft. of long-vacant space at the entrance to Lake Anne Village Center. The County Board of Supervisors is expected to act on this exhaustively-documented project at its first February meeting. Indications are that the supervisors will give county residents still another superb reason to enjoy the world-renowned pleasures of Lake Anne.

William Nicoson is a former publisher of Connection Newspapers.