

# Reflections, David Sive Memorial

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By William Paxton (grandson)

The program for which we are all here today is entitled Reflections. A reflection is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “The action of an object, surface, etc., in reflecting light, heat, sound, or other form of radiation without absorbing it.” This is something all of us know so well: looking at a mountain scene reflecting on a lake, or maybe the sound waves of car horns reflecting upon the towering sky-scrapers of Manhattan. But there is another kind of reflection; a more personal kind of reflection. The way one person’s life and spirit can reflect from others’. This is what I will try to share with you.

David Sive was a man who is known by many as a pioneer in the field of modern environmental law. And while I can remember him as a professional often from when I would visit his office as a child, my cousins, sister and I know him as Grandpa, a family man. We are all very lucky to have gotten to know this side of David.

When I was a child, Grandpa bought me my first bicycle and taught me how to ride it. Soon afterwards, it was my first watch and he taught me how to read it. He encouraged in me skills of practical nature and it was not too much longer that I was taught how to read a topographic map in order to navigate the hilly Catskill terrain.

When I was in middle school and high school I didn’t see him much. Later, during college though, I started to form a new relationship with him when he moved to the Green Hill retirement home. It was then when I took on the challenge of teaching him how to operate a personal computer. Suddenly I was the one teaching him the practical skills.

For the next five years, we continued to spend time together and we would take each other on outings. Either a visit to Bear Mountain or to Manhattan for the Environmental Advocates’ dinner. It was through those outings that I realized that I had been reflecting his love for the outdoors and the natural world. All the sudden, those trips up to the lean-to in the Catskills and making a bed of ferns made more sense to me.

After this realization, I had another. That David Sive wasn’t multi-sided: a driven litigator on one side and family-man on the other. He actually was just someone who had a passion and did everything he could with it. He stood in defense of nature, before it wasn’t the popular thing to do. Years later, he continued to instill this passion in future generations as a professor and a leader of advocacy groups. Later, when I knew him, he shared this passion with his family and future generations.

David Sive was a man who was driven, most of all, by an emotion: his love of the natural world. This love was exemplified through every tear that would sneak out of the corner of his eye when telling romanticized stories of his past.

David Sive was known for greatest accomplishments in pioneering environmental law but when I asked him recently what he was most proud of, his response was his family.