

The Naming of Shanes Creek

By Mary McAnaw, Maire McAnaw Weathers, and Susie Duvall

John P McAnaw was a historian, preservationist, and an outdoorsman. When he moved to Kings Park West in 1982, he was on active duty with the US Army. Upon retiring, he became involved with the KPW Civic Association's Parks and Lake Committee and went on to serve as Chairman for over 20 years. He spearheaded numerous projects to improve our trails and parkland. In 2008, John was honored in a ceremony that renamed this area the "John P McAnaw Woodlands & Recreation Area at Royal Lake" in recognition of his selfless dedication.

In 1983, John and his family adopted an Irish setter puppy by the name of Shane. Shane was a big red friendly puppy, energetic and always up for an adventure. He was John's constant companion as they explored the wooded areas around Royal Lake. Their family home on Gainsborough Drive backed up to the parkland and was a stone's throw from a winding creek. This creek begins west of Roberts Road and meanders along the southwest border of KPW before flowing into Royal Lake. John and Shane were a familiar sight to all along this creek bed - neither had ever met a stranger, always greeting fellow trail lovers with conversation and a tail wag.

One day, John was stepping over rocks, half way to the west side of the creek while Shane paced anxiously on the east bank. Shane let out a high-pitched puppy "yelp" and leapt onto John's back for a free ride across the creek. Over the next year, Shane grew to a muscular 115 pounds, conquered his fear and learned to joyfully vault over the creek in a single bound.



John researched Fairfax County Land Records and was unable to find any record that officially named this creek, so he started referring to it in his speeches and writings as "Shanes Creek"

(intentionally leaving out the apostrophe). As Chairman of Parks and Lake, John frequently visited Area 4, Fairfax County Park Authority and the Government Center on behalf of lake and woodland concerns. During presentations and when showing homeowners around, John referred to the unnamed creek as "Shanes Creek." John organized volunteers to meet for park cleanup days on the east side of Shanes Creek. Everyone knew exactly which creek John was talking about. Over time and after many repetitions, it became widely known as Shanes Creek.

Shanes Creek continues to be cited in newsletters and Kings Park West Facebook posts today. Shanes Creek Trail is a beautiful wooded path that leaves Royal Lake and follows Shanes Creek upstream. Three public access points are located on Gainsborough Drive (near intersection with Claridge Court), on Dundalk Street and on Roberts Road. But don't tell too many people about this hidden gem!

Susie Duvall presented a wooden sign to John McAnaw in 1990. It was never displayed near Shanes Creek for fear vandals would destroy it. Hence, it has been in the McAnaw's home ever since. Mrs. McAnaw is donating this sign to the KPWCA Parks and Lake Committee, in hopes that it will be installed along the trail to formally recognize Shanes Creek for all who enjoy it.

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