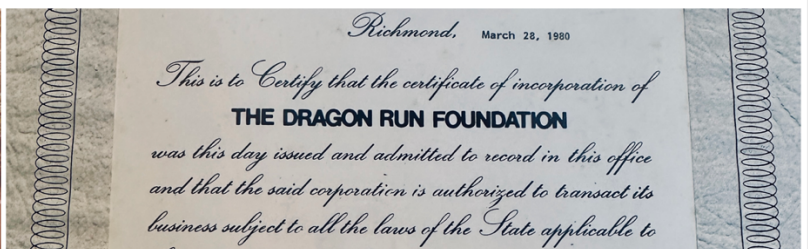
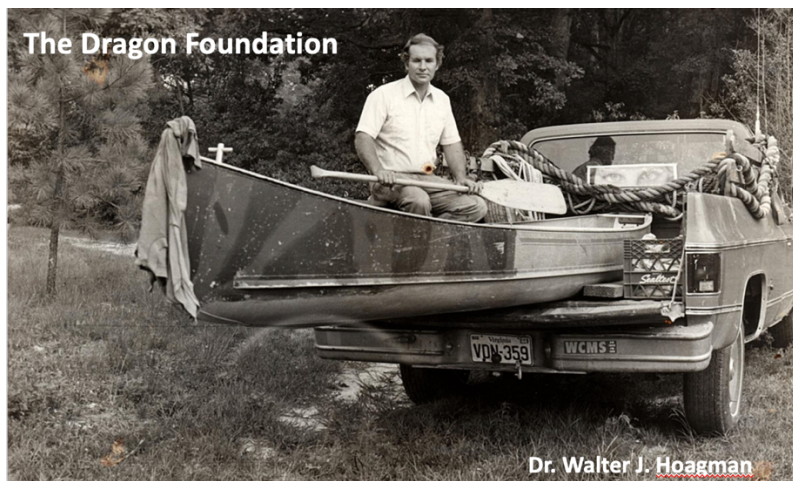


Walter J. Hoagman and The Dragon Foundation



A decade before the Friends of Dragon Run received its charter in 1990 an organization was chartered to help protect the Dragon Run. Chartered in 1980, the Dragon Run Foundation which was also known as DRF. As stated in an early DFR announcement - *“The Dragon Run Foundation is a non-profit educational organization. A State Charter was granted DRF to pursue its purposes of research, education and public service on the Dragon Run, the Swamp, and the Watershed. Membership is free and open to any individual, family, or business upon application.”*

Dr. Walter J. Hoagman, who had worked for nearly a decade at VIMS and then in businesses related to the natural world launched DRF and was the organization’s Director. As a scientist he wanted to do something for humanity which was to establish a foundation to help protect the Dragon. Just as importantly was his drive to inform the community that *“Middle Peninsula residents have a unique resource close to home.”* DRF kept contact with the community through pamphlets, newsletter, and events and festivals and such as the Dragon Run Festival. The Dragon Festival in 1980 for example brought thousands of folks to the Rappahannock

Community College in Glens. According to the DRF's Summer 1980 The Dragon Run Newsletter - "*DRF distributed approximately 500-800 Folders, sold 92 copies of Dragon Run Reprints, and signed up 61 new members.*" The Dragon Run Reprints was a collection of articles about the Dragon that originally appeared in other publications mostly in the Commonwealth. The lead article in the collection was titled The Dragon Canoe Cruising Trail. It had originally been published in the June 1959 edition of Virginia Wildlife by a James V. Morgan, Gloucester VA. The name does ring a bell as the author is known to most of us as Jimmy Morgan who went on to form the Friends of Dragon Run later in the 1980s and gain a charter for the organization in 1990.

Walter recounted speaking to Rotary Clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, and school groups about the Dragon. Also having donation jars at various places in the community to raise money to support the DRF. The DRF did get opposition from a few in the community to include "*that you going to open up the Dragon to, you know, too much use so therefore leave it alone.*" Walter with a smile recounts "what protected the Dragon days I was there, it was just so hard to canoe."

The DRF growth slowed in the mid 1980s as some of its leaders left the area. Membership never got above 160. Walter moved back to his native Michigan to help his mother following the death of his father. He became a part of the Michigan State Extension where he was a Sea Grant agent for Lake Huron. Following his retirement, he decided to move back to the Middle Peninsula. Upon his return in 2000 the Friends of Dragon Run "*was up and running strong.*"

Walter's answer to a few of my last questions are worth recounting. The first question was - What was your favorite memory about DRF? *"We were public spirited. And that is always a good feeling.... here's a neglected environment...we wanted it to stay natural...so we felt we were on the right side of history."* My second question was – What were the key impacts of the DRF. "Awareness, I would say some kind of environmental awareness."

This article was made possible by the generosity of Walter Hoagman sharing materials from the DRF and sitting down for a wide-ranging interview about the Dragon, the 1970s and 1980s and the years with the DRF. A big thank you to Walter Hoagman one of the early and ever-growing list of champions of the Dragon Run.