



ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATIVE NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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On the Passing of Pete Seeger

(Kingston, NY) The Ulster County Legislature joins today in the mourning of legendary singer, songwriter, and activist Pete Seeger. Pete's music lives in the mountains of Ulster County. From Woodland Park and Woodstock to Kingston and New Paltz, the man and his five string banjo could bring people from all walks of life together. He may have opened Woodstock 1969 but his music never left these mountains. It has been heard at benefit concerts throughout the region, up to and until his health would no longer allow it.

As a frequent visitor to the Ashokan Center and the Ashokan Reservoir communities, Pete and Toshi were visitors to many local establishments. Boiceville Inn owner and Legislative Chairman John Parete noted, "Pete brought a gentle wave of awe and inspiration as he entered a room. Just his presence at a rally could unite people. When voices united in his songs, it would bring that power of one to affect the whole. His music and message lives on."

Pete was on the forefront of the labor and civil rights movements starting over 70 years ago, a recollection noted by Legislator David Donaldson. "He continued to fight for the down trodden all his life. Pete will be greatly missed. The last time I saw him, he was singing at a labor organization meeting. It gave chills up and down the spine just to think of all the history that he presented that day."

While many Ulster County Legislators have been touched by the loss of Pete Seeger, none have been touched more so than first-term Legislator Manna Jo Greene. Manna Jo worked hand and hand with Pete as the Environmental Director for the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, an organization that Pete founded with his wife, Toshi. In Pete, Manna Jo found a kindred spirit. Together, they would sing and speak on behalf of an environment and the communities they love and cherish.

Manna Jo stated, "What was so special about Pete Seeger was that in a time of discord and pollution, he had the vision to understand that, if we all work together, we can create a world that works for everyone -- where people live in harmony with each other and the environment. He had the creativity to realize that by connecting people to the river they would realize the importance of protecting it and restoring it to its natural beauty. In the late 1960's, when the Sloop Clearwater was built, the river was fouled from one end to the other with raw sewage and industrial waste. In the early 1970's, Pete and his friends sailed up and down the river, using the power of song to draw people to the river and inspire them to action. They collected many thousands of signatures calling for the passage of the Clean Water Act, then sailed down to Washington DC and held an impromptu concert in the halls of Congress. This was considered the tipping point in the passage of the landmark environmental legislation that is responsible for the much improved quality of life we enjoy today. Whether it was workers rights, civil rights, world peace or environmental protection -- right through to calling for a ban on fracking -- Pete Seeger was at the forefront of every major movement for social justice and the environment in the past 75 years. His contribution is of global proportions and we were very blessed to have had him living and working right here in the Hudson Valley as he championed these many causes. Now that he has passed, it is up to all of us to be sure his legacy continues."