



Remembering E.M. “Pete” Bakwin

The McGraw family is mourning E.M. “Pete” Bakwin, a longtime member and influential supporter of the Foundation. Mr. Bakwin, a retired banking executive and passionate angler, died on Thanksgiving at age 90.

Mr. Bakwin, who joined McGraw in 1972, “helped advance our fisheries research program through his generosity and also his curiosity,” said Charles S. Potter Jr., McGraw president and CEO. “He was the consummate gentleman, generous and thoughtful and always willing to help McGraw.”

When he purchased a 400-acre farm in LaPorte, Ind., Mr. Bakwin asked McGraw to help him evaluate and improve the property’s fishing lakes. Following the advice of McGraw’s Tom Harder and Gordy Gotsch, the farm became a showpiece of fisheries management known as “Seven Springs.”

“Tom and Gordy did what McGraw is most proud of – helping to put science to work,” Potter said. “In this case, it led to an exceptional fishery where only a modest one had existed.

“The result was that Pete, who had long supported McGraw, became even more engaged in our research and advancing the careers of our fisheries biologists.”

Timothy N Thoeleck, a former McGraw board chairman and a friend of Mr. Bakwin's for more than 50 years, recalled him as an outstanding business leader, first with Darling and Co., then with MidCity Financial and then as board chairman of MB Financial after its merger with MidCity.

But he also remembered a world traveler who saw the world from his 126-foot boat, "Embark," a generous friend, an avid fly fisherman, and a person who loved to hunt birds at McGraw – a pastime he frequently shared with Thoeleck and other friends.

"He was one of our great licensees," Thoeleck said. "He just loved it."

When he passed away at his beloved Seven Springs, it was the "culmination of a full life well lived," Thoeleck said. "He was one of my favorite people."

Potter spoke for many when he said, "we will miss his inquisitive mind and his friendship."