

Embers

Warm Hearth Village

John Cairns grew up in the small town of Conshohocken, Pennsylvania near Philadelphia. At an early age he developed a love for nature and science. John attended Penn State University where he met his wife Jean and later joined the Navy during WWII. He continued his education at Swarthmore College earning a major in Biology and a minor in Chemistry and Physics. He received his Master's Degree and Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania.

John's love of nature led him to a job with the Academy of Natural Science. His work in field studies took him around the world to places like Peru and Canada and all over North America. John's wife Jean, a biochemist often accompanied him on his travels. John, Jean and their four children spent most of their summers in Gothic, Colorado. The Cairns family never needed an official vacation as the family loved this field base so much. This same location is Jean's final resting place.

In 1968, John was contacted by a colleague to accept a position at Virginia Tech. John didn't even know where Blacksburg was but he had heard that the trout fishing was good in Virginia. John recalls having to make a quick decision about the job and buying his first home over the telephone sight unseen.

While at Virginia Tech, John became acquainted with a larger than life character - Dr. Wybe Kroontje. Wybe approached him one day with the concept of Warm Hearth Village and at the time a small group of investors was in the process of acquiring land to build the senior living community. "I bought into the idea immediately," said John. "I offered Wybe whatever contribution he needed to make his vision a reality and with our donation, Jean and I became two of the first founding contributors back in the early 1970's," he recalls.



giving back to the environment

The natural beauty of the Village and the forward-thinking continuum of care attracted John and Jean to Warm Hearth. They moved to the Village in 2000 settling in among the trees in Dogwood Circle. Although John officially retired in 1995 from Virginia Tech his full-time work continues - now from his apartment at Showalter Center.

John has written 63 books most of which are still used as educational tools within the industry. He works with the New River Free Press on book reviews and is currently finishing his draft for the Legacy Lectures - a time capsule covering a span of 700 years. In his presence you feel his true love of the environment and his commitment to his profession. In his home you see the tangible mementos of contributions he has made to his community and environment. He received a Sustained Achievement award for his commitment to preservation from the Renewable Resources Foundation in 2001 and two of his favorite honors include a U.S. Presidential Commendation for Environmental Activities and a Fellow award, from the Association for Women in Science.