A Tribute to Roy Walters: A Visionary Inventor and Trailblazer

Roy was a visionary advocate for cycling and preservation, whose unwavering dedication and innovative spirit have left an enduring legacy. His tireless efforts have transformed our region, inspiring groundbreaking improvements to our historic landmarks and trails that we all enjoy today.

After earning his PhD in nuclear engineering, Roy co-founded Ocean Optics in 1989, revolutionizing the field of spectroscopy. His groundbreaking work, including the development of the world's first miniature fiber optic spectrometer propelled the company to global success. These innovations enabled groundbreaking research, such as studying the optical properties of the Hope Diamond at the Smithsonian Institution. More important to us, he opened new applications for spectroscopy to monitor the health of the environment and oceans.

In 2001 Roy and his wife Sandy, moved to Stone Island, near the tiny historic town of Enterprise. Enterprise was a 19th-century resort, home of the famous Brock House grand hotel, a steamboat destination for the rich and famous including a president. Enterprise was the seat of Volusia County during the Steamboat Era from 1854 until 1887.

The Walters' love for cycling and commitment to preserving the past led them to become active community leaders. When the historic 1936 Enterprise Elementary School faced the threat of demolition, the Walters stepped up, donating funds to purchase and relocate the building and spearheading its restoration into the Enterprise Museum that many of you experienced today. Roy's countless hours of labor, from stripping and sanding to varnishing, were instrumental in bringing the museum to life.

The Walters' passion for preservation extended beyond the museum. They played a crucial role in saving the Thornby property from development, ensuring its transformation into a beautiful park with an inclusive playground, walking trails, and donating a stunning stone pavilion. Both the Enterprise Museum and Thornby Park now serve as trailheads for the Spring to Spring section of the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop and the Florida Coast to Coast Trail. Neither the Enterprise Museum or Thornby Park would exist today without the Walters contributions

As avid cyclists, Roy and Sandy were dedicated to expanding trails in the region. Roy was a founding member of the River to Sea TPO Bike/Ped Advisory Committee (BPAC) that Jason, Liz, Emery and I all serve on. He led the committee to receive the "Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee of the Year" award. The Walters' close relationship with the Florida Freewheelers enabled him leverage their knowledge of bikable roads to make significant contributions to the development of the popular R2CTPO Bicycle Suitability Map.

Roy died: March 30, 2023 at their second home, a ski lodge in Driggs, Idaho. But his legacy lives on through his wife Sandy who continues to support the River2Sea Loop Alliance and its "ONWARD for Life" program. Let us honor Roy's memory by celebrating his achievements and embracing his passion for trails and preservation.