

# GEOLOGIC PAST

## Highlighting Articles from Past Issues of *GSA Bulletin*

### “Better Get the Garbage Before it Gets You”

Luna B. Leopold, *GSA Bulletin*, June 1973

The last time GSA met in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, was November 1972. Luna B. Leopold was outgoing GSA president and delivered his address to meeting participants on “River Channel Change with Time” (published in *GSA Bulletin* in 1973 [v. 84, no. 6, p. 1845–1860]). Leopold’s talk focused on Watts Branch, “a small tributary of the Potomac River, north of Washington, D.C.” He notes that he chose this river and its small basin because it had been the spot where, years earlier, he had taken his children on picnics and to play catch. Over time, he writes, suburban growth resulted in a basin filled with “muddy trash heaps” and “the little stream ... littered with bricks, concrete, trash, plastic bottles, and old tires.” To counteract such adverse effects, Leopold calls for “observations [to be] made on

the ground” to augment flow records and water-quality determinations. “Geologists,” he writes, “more so than most people, know how the natural world operates and what beauty lies in these mechanisms of nature. If some of the beauty of undisturbed processes is to exist within the reach of cities, the present practices of planning, design, and construction must include some geologic knowledge.”

Leopold’s article includes a song, “Better get the garbage before it gets you,” (lyrics written by him, set to a traditional tune). Find it and the entire 1972 presidential address article at <http://gsabulletin.gsapubs.org/content/84/6/1845.full.pdf> (open access).

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