

OBITUARIES|HAROLD "BUD" JORDAHL JR.

Jordahl worked to preserve Wisconsin's natural landscapes



Harold "Bud" Jordahl, seen in 2003, was a state conservationist who helped establish Earth Day in 1970. He died Tuesday in Madison. Credit: AP

By Amy Rabideau Silvers of the Journal Sentinel

An environmental leader who could see both the forest and enjoy the trees, Harold "Bud" Jordahl Jr. spent a lifetime working to preserve the wild Wisconsin he loved.

Jordahl worked with former Gov. and U.S. Sen. Gaylord Nelson in a host of roles, including on federal legislation to create the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. The two collaborated on the national Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in 1968. The St. Croix

and Namekagon rivers - where Jordahl courted his wife on canoe trips - were so designated early on.

He was involved in establishing the first Earth Day in 1970 and assisted in the development of what is now the state Stewardship Program.

He worked as director of the Department of Resource Development, a forerunner to the Department of Natural Resources. He later served with the Natural Resources Board, including as chairman, and as a longtime professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the UW Extension.

Jordahl died of natural causes Tuesday at the University of Wisconsin Hospital in Madison. He was 83.

"He gave a speech on the 40th anniversary of the first Earth Day and jumped in a truck to go turkey hunting," said his son, Harald "Jordy" Jordahl, one of his hunting companions. It kept raining, but that didn't bother Bud Jordahl.

"He was sitting in his turkey blind, reading and drinking coffee and having a little piece of chocolate," Jordy said.

That was the Jordahl many knew.

"With the death of Bud Jordahl, Wisconsin lost a great conservationist, and I lost a most cherished mentor and my deer hunting partner," Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk said in a statement.

"Bud was a great teacher, practitioner, and advocate of conservation and restoration," she said. "The Wisconsin landscape is richer and healthier for his efforts."

Others agreed.

"Bud served the state very well as one of Wisconsin's great environmentalists, and we will miss his leadership," Gov. Jim Doyle said in a statement.

Jordahl was named to the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame in 2005. He was a founder of 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, Friends of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore and the Gathering Waters Conservancy. The conservancy created a stewardship award in his name.

Born and raised in McIntosh, Minn., he finished high school in Ohio. He served with the Navy during World War II and later earned bachelor's and master's degrees in forestry from the University of Michigan.

"Then he got his dream job, game biologist in the old Wisconsin Conservation Department," his son said.

He subsequently earned a master's degree in public administration at Harvard University, then returned to Wisconsin.

Federal positions included serving as regional coordinator for the Upper Mississippi-Western Great Lakes Area for then-U.S. Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall. President Lyndon Johnson later appointed Jordahl co-chair of the Upper Great Lakes Regional Commission.

"He went from one dream job to another dream job," his son said. "He always said he was so fortunate to have the chance to make a difference."

Jordahl also was a man who practiced what he preached. In the late 1960s, he and wife Marilyn bought an old Richland County farm property, restoring its forests and prairies and ponds and delighting in the maple syrup, morels and friends the land gave them.

"The legacy is not just the projects he accomplished with colleagues, friends, collaborators and family, but inspiring people about conservancy in Wisconsin and beyond," his son said.

Survivors also include daughters Kristine and Kari; sister Margaret Rhude; and grandchildren. His wife and daughter Johanna died earlier.

Visitation was held Sunday. A memorial service will be at 11 a.m. Monday at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 5701 Raymond Road, Madison.

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