

Richard A. Hemp
(1909 - 1989)

"I ask myself if I am going to leave the world in as good a shape as when I came into it and what I can do for future generations. What I would hope to do is achieve something for my children and yours, and all the others."

-Richard Hemp

Richard A. Hemp was born March 24, 1909 in the town of Weston, Wisconsin. He attended Neillville High School and Carthage College. At different times he owned and published the Iron County Miner in Hurley, and the Mosinee Times. He was employed as the Mosinee postmaster from 1939 to 1972.

Dick, as he was called by friends, was a man who stood up for what he believed in. He was concerned about the public and their views, and the natural resources of this state. He did more than love the outdoors, he worked for it, on his own time, separate from his career as postmaster.

Hemp was elected to the Wisconsin Conservation Congress in 1943 and served as its chairman from 1948 to 1952. He founded the Wisconsin Federation of Conservation Clubs (WFCC) with Les Woerpel, in 1949. The WFCC later evolved into the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation (WWF) which he presided over from 1954 until 1959. He subsequently became the Executive Director, and served as a member of the Board of Directors until his death. The WWF has been a strong voice for the environment over the years. Hemp also served on the National Wildlife Federation Executive Board of

Directors.

Hemp's committee and policy-making involvement does not stop there. From 1978-1989 he was on the state Natural Resources Board and served on state committees dealing with the Outdoor Recreation Act Program. He served on the DNR council of Environmental Advisors, the DNR law enforcement and hunter ethics task force, and was the original member of the Wisconsin Natural Beauty Council.

One of Hemp's major achievements most noted by such conservation colleagues as Dan Trainer, Associate Dean of the College of Natural Resources, include his involvement as chairman of the group that drew up Marathon County's first comprehensive plan for zoning and resource management. Jay Reed of the Milwaukee Journal called Hemp's chief legacy "a persuasive report" which he wrote in 1979. The report was an argument against political control of the DNR.

Though he was a fighter for the environment, Hemp had a soft-spoken and easy going manner. Jay Reed of the Milwaukee Journal wrote a column about him shortly after his death, and called him "the tall, stately, always gentlemanly activist from Mosinee."

Hemp was a hunter and fisherperson with a conscience about the values of all forms of wildlife, be it game or non-game species. One instance that exemplifies him well, is an issue that came up just a few years ago. While he served on the Natural Resources Board, a proposal was set before him which involved taking all restrictions and legal protection off the woodchuck. Although he enjoyed hunting himself, he objected strongly to the

target practice that would be employed on the woodchuck. It was a little thing, but one of sizeable ethics.

John Lawton, a respected member of the Natural Resources Board (NRB), said "I was so certain of his ability to grasp the right course on many issues that I sometimes waited to see how Hemp was going to vote before I voted." According to Dan Trainer, former Dean of the College of Natural Resources at the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point, Hemp was a man who accomplished much, and had "a way of getting things done."

Mr. Hemp's conservation contributions span over five decades more. He has been honored for his work at local, county, state and national levels. His natural resource accomplishments are so extending in variety and scope it is difficult to pinpoint just a few issues that were all his. He was highly involved in so many aspects of conservation in Wisconsin. Hemp was named Wisconsin's Outstanding Conservationist by the Milwaukee County Conservation Alliance in 1959 and received similar honors from the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, the Waukesha County Conservation Alliance, the Marathon County Soil and Water Conservation Department, and the state Izaak Walton league. In 1983, he received UW-SP's Conservationist of the year award.

Robert A. Lachmund, the Corresponding Secretary of The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, remarked that "these are just a few of the awards Hemp has received. Dick Hemp earned all of them in a life-time devoted to conservation." He was one of only 10 nonprofessional conservationists of the United States to receive the American Motors Conservation Award in 1969.

In 1989, in respect for Hemp's many years of service to

conservation causes, the Natural Resources Board named state land along the Tomorrow River in portage County "The Richard A. Hemp Fishery Area." Hemp's personal dedication to conservation and Wisconsin is an outstanding example of citizen leadership - a quiet voice for nature, with strong resonance.

Sources:

Hemp, Gertrude. Personal Interview. 26 November, 1990.
Menominee, Wisconsin.

Lachmund, Robert A. Wisconsin Wildlife Federation. Letter to Dr. Daniel Trainer. Undated. Reeseville, Wisconsin.

Reed, Jay. "Outdoors". Milwaukee Journal. December 31, 1989.

Rogers, George. Unpublished biography. 1990.

Rogers, George. Personal Interview. 23 January, 1991.

Rogers, George. "Mid-Wisconsin Outdoors." Stevens Point Journal. January 3, 1990. p. 7.

Trainer, Dan. Personal Interview. 28 January, 1991.