

Melvin N. "Mully" Taylor
(1903 - 1984)

Trees for Tomorrow Education Center in Eagle, Wisconsin has a number of innovative environmental "firsts" on its lists of achievements. Established in the winter of 1944, the following year it became the first program offering conservation workshops for teachers. It was the first public natural resources education in center in the Midwest. Under the guidance of its Executive Director of 31 years, Trees for Tomorrow established 42 of Wisconsin's 345 school forests, a system unique in the United States. The provident founder and leader of this center and its mission was Mully Taylor.

Taylor was born in 1903 in Merrill, Wisconsin, son of a river log driver. In high school he worked on a planing mill seven days a week. Making his way west by train, he took on construction jobs and eventually worked as a seaman on a boat to Alaska. He attended the University of Idaho and after college worked at the Chicago City News Bureau and then the Merrill Herald as a reporter and ad salesman.

One of his job assignments at Merrill Herald was publicizing the "Pulpwood Goes to War" campaign. The resulting pulpwood "roundup" was so successful that the campaign committee decided to continue its efforts. The new group, with Taylor's enthusiasm, formed Trees for Tomorrow, Inc. Nine paper mills gave their backing and a CCC camp in Eagle River became their headquarters.

Since its opening in 1944, Trees for Tomorrow, under

Mully's leadership, has helped 12,000 private landowners manage 370,000 acres - more than 23 million seedlings have been planted. It has seen well over 125,000 students, teachers, bankers, printers, publishers and foresters (these estimates are over 5 years old now!). Taylor put foresters face-to-face with the public as educators for the first time. He taught foresters to "sell" conservation and added a new dimension to their responsibilities

Taylor and "Trees" began assisting owners of small woodland tracts to practice forestry. He set up a tree planting organization and developed management plans for nearly 400,000 acres of forest land. In this way he established the field for private consulting foresters, the Department of Natural Resources, University Extension foresters and the Tree Farm Movement

Because of Taylor's efforts, people began working together about natural resources for the first time. Business and industry people talked to important statewide civic and social organizations; and to teachers, students and citizens. "Trees" spoke for the rights and privileges of everyone in regard Wisconsin's natural resources.

Taylor helped develop the field of environmental education as we know it today, using "hands-on" education. Students and teachers learned in the outdoors, experiencing the environment first hand for several days at a time. Dan Satran Sr. of the News Review wrote of Mully and his wife Wilhelmine Mead Taylor, that "In addition to the planting of trees through their efforts, they planted in the hearts of

many young men and women who attended workshops at Trees for Tomorrow, a seed of love for the forests and northern Wisconsin."

Current "Trees" director, Henry Heskell said of Mully that "More than anyone, Mully guided conservation thought and practice in Wisconsin. He fired Wisconsin residents with the idea that planting tree seedlings was the way to rebuild the state's natural resources, so vital to its economy." Taylor, it has been said, helped Wisconsin citizens become some of the most literate in the Nation about natural resources.

Taylor's contributions have been recognized by three governors, the Legislature, the U.S. Forest Service, the Society of American Foresters, women's clubs, Future Farmers of America and 4-H. He was named Wisconsin Conservation Educator of the Year in 1966. In recognition of his pioneering contributions to the field of conservation education, The Forest History Association of Wisconsin gave him its Distinguished Service Award in 1983.

Mully Taylor retired in 1975. He and his wife died in a tragic house fire in 1984.