



Harley W. MacKenzie

Conservation leader MacKenzie, 91, dies

By Peter D. Fox
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Harley W. MacKenzie, 91, at one time the state's top-ranking game warden, a pioneer in advocating conservation of state natural resources and later director of the Wisconsin Conservation Department, died Thursday in a Portage hospital.

MacKenzie, a Poynette native who returned there after leaving state government, began his conservation work in 1910 as a game warden in Antigo, Langlade County.

The MacKenzie Environmental Education Center near Poynette received his name in 1971. Patrick J. Lucey, then governor, told him and well-wishers:

"Your foresight and understanding set an early course for Wisconsin's environmental protection programs. Before the environmental movement grew into its present height of public

concern, you were planning for the future of Wisconsin's resources."

MacKenzie persuaded the state to establish the Poynette education center in 1934 as the state Conservation Center and Game Farm. Today, thousands of school children, teachers and adults annually take outdoor education classes there.

The son of Scottish immigrants, "Mac," the name he preferred, moved up through the ranks of the old Conservation Department — now the Department of Natural Resources — and became chief of law enforcement in 1925.

He served as department director from 1934 to 1942, when he left office under charges from legislators that he was a bootlegger during Prohibition. No charges were ever proven.

MacKenzie is credited with beginning the state's battle against indus-

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trial pollution by threatening a lawsuit against a northern Wisconsin paper mill for massive fish kills. He succeeded in getting the mill to clean up its waste water.

But the veteran outdoorsman did more than make threats.

"I've stared down the wrong end of a shotgun many a time," he once told an interviewer.

MacKenzie was a founder of the state's Conservation Congress, a citizen group with representatives from every county that advises the DNR on conservation, hunting, fishing and related matters.

He strongly advocated the purchase of what is now state-owned portions of Horicon Marsh.

In 1942, admiring conservationists unsuccessfully tried to draft him as a gubernatorial candidate.

After leaving the Conservation Department, he served as superintendent of the state War Hemp Industries. In 1948 he returned to Poynette, where he took over his father's insurance and real estate business.

He served as Poynette village president, a village trustee and a Columbia County supervisor.

Through all his government service, Mr. MacKenzie never lost his love of the outdoors.

"I love to roam the woods," he said in 1971, "and the streams, for that matter."

He also was a semi-professional baseball player for teams in Milwaukee, Hartford, Portage, Lodi and Poynette.

In April he moved to a Poynette nursing home. On Sunday morning he complained of being ill and was taken to the Portage hospital.

MacKenzie is survived by his wife, Lydia; two daughters, Mrs. Ann MacKenzie Maher, Springfield, Ill., and Mrs. Kay MacKenzie, 4723 Sheboygan Ave., Madison; seven grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. A son, Peter, died earlier this year.

Friends may call from 4 to 8 p.m.

Death Takes Harley W. MacKenzie

FUNERAL SERVICES for Harley W. MacKenzie, 91, Poynette, were held from the Pflanz Funeral Home Monday afternoon.

Mr. MacKenzie died last Thursday morning at Divine Savior Hospital in Portage.

MacKenzie was director of the State Conservation Department (forerunner of the DNR) from 1933 to 1942, and was respected as a pioneer in advocating conservation of state natural resources.

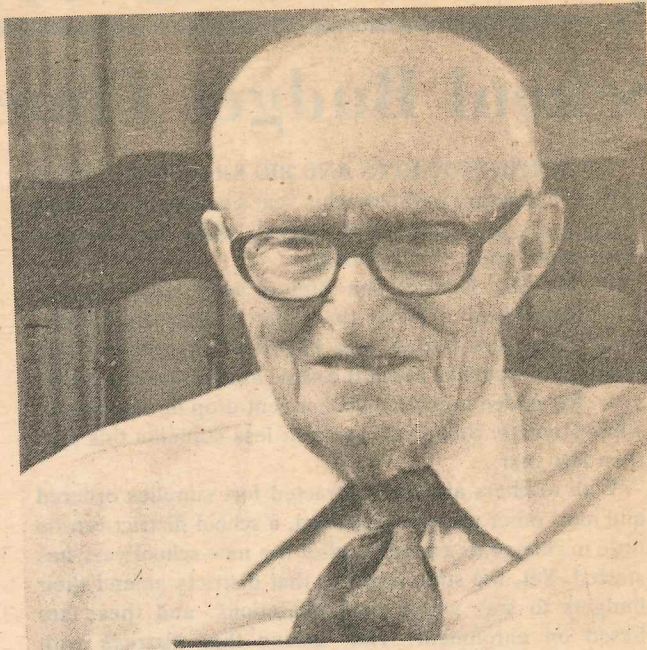
While he headed the Conservation Department, he initiated the establishment of the State Game and Fur Farm in Poynette in 1934. When that operation was expanded to include a conservation education center, it was renamed the MacKenzie Environmental Center in his honor.

MacKenzie, a Poynette resident, started his career in conservation work in 1910 as a game warden at Antigo. He served as Conservation Department director from 1934 to 1942. MacKenzie was a founder of the state's Conservation Congress, a citizen group with representatives from every county that advises the DNR on conservation, hunting, fishing and related matters. He strongly advocated the purchase of what is now state-owned portions of the Horicon Marsh.

After leaving the Conservation Department, he served as superintendent of the state Warm Hemp Industries. In 1948 he returned to Poynette, where he took over his father's insurance and real estate business. He served as Poynette village president, a village trustee and a Columbia County supervisor.

In his early years MacKenzie played semi-professional baseball with teams from Milwaukee and Hartford.

Last April MacKenzie suffered a stroke while returning from a trip, and had been a resident at a nursing home in Portage. Sunday morning he was taken ill and became a patient at the Portage hospital.



The Rev. Richard H. Burgess of the First Presbyterian Church, Poynette, officiated at the funeral services. Dorothy Pache, a former Poynette resident now of Kingston, was the organist. Six uniformed conservation wardens from the DNR were pallbearers.

Following burial, the group gathered at the MacKenzie Environmental Center for a luncheon.

Memorials for MacKenzie may be made to the MacKenzie Environmental Center, Poynette.

EULOGY —

Eulogy delivered at H. W. MacKenzie's funeral by his son-in-law, Dr. C. C. Maher, Jr. from Springfield, Ill., at Pflanz Funeral Home, Oct. 1, 1979.

Henry Van Dyke said, "He that planteth a tree is a servant of God; he provideth a kindness for many generations, and faces that he hath not seen shall bless him."

Eulogy and to eulogize come from the Greek; to eulogize means to speak well of another. It also means to speak truly. To speak well and truly then of a man is to admit first that no one of us is without fault, and Harley MacKenzie is no exception.

To speak of H.W. is to weigh virtues against faults to present an honest portrait. I don't intend to speak at length and the problem is one of choosing from many qualities that describe him. A list has been suggested: his love of outdoors; his love of people, his sense of humor, his pride in family; initiative, ingenuity, impatience at tasks undone, intolerance at times of the shortcomings of others; his common sense, his live of sentiment, his energy. When a man has many facets that make his character it is difficult to select the few which paint his picture best.

First, he was a man of character and unbending principle. I knew him for forty years; I never saw him bend in a matter of principle. As far as Mac was concerned, right was right, wrong was wrong and there was no middle ground. He was for a time an officer of law enforcement; he did enforce the law, for which he had the utmost respect and he insisted that all be treated alike under the law.

He was himself once accused of dishonesty; to those who knew him well such a charge was frivolous at best. He wisely chose to ignore it, considering it beneath his dignity to reply and the people of this state agreed with him.

Second, he was a man of action and accomplishment. In

every sphere of his life he was busy. . .athletics as a young man, music through his whole life, immensely productive in his professional career, active in community affairs wherever he lived, enthusiastic traveler, much sought after as lecturer and public speaker; he was a natural talent at all of this. The activities I've just described are but a fraction of the whole. As I knew him, he could not bear to be idle; there was always something to be done and he was busy at getting it done.

Third, he was a gentleman. . .or, better said, a gentle man. Physically strong, I never saw him use force to accomplish anything. Bad language and bad manners offended him; the strongest language I ever heard him use was an occasional "damn." The most important part of his gentlemanliness was the loyalty it engendered. Over the years that I have known him the devotion of the people who worked with and for him is almost unbelievable.

These, then, are three attributes of H.W.'s character. The list is much longer, too long.

I'd like to add my personal view of what made him the whole man he was. I think it was his love for this state; its lands, its waters, and its people. His whole life, public and private, expressed this love; he set new standards for a department which was then and is now a model for all; he wrote some of our laws regulating the use of public lands; he planted trees; he released fish and birds for fishermen and hunters; he urged the purchase of land for future use by all of us.

In today's climate, describing these activities may seem trite, but H.W. did these things in a day when no other had the vision to see the need for them. I think this vision was his greatest attribute.

His physical being is not now here, but he is not gone. He lives, and will live, in our parks, our streams, our forests. We are lucky indeed to have had him.