

mammoth

A quarterly publication about the Ice Age Trail
from the Ice Age Park & Trail Foundation, Inc.

Tales



Henry S. Reuss 1912-2002

by Paul G. Hayes

Former Congressman Henry S. Reuss left his footprints all over Wisconsin but nowhere did he leave such a well-trod path as the one that runs up and down the Kettle Moraine ridges of southeastern Wisconsin, amid the hills, kettles, lakes and other glacial features that he lived among and loved.

The lifelong public servant and environmentalist would have been 90 on February 22. He died Jan. 12 in California. He had been actively involved in Ice Age Trail affairs until just weeks before his death.

Henry had a lifelong love affair with Wisconsin, and loving Wisconsin means that you love its natural resources.

It was in Congress that Henry made his lasting mark on Wisconsin. Taking the idea from Ray Zillmer, a Milwaukee lawyer and outdoorsman, Henry pushed for the formation of the Ice Age National Scientific Reserve in Wisconsin in 1964. His bill protected nine important natural features left behind by the great Wisconsin glacier and connected many of them by the 1,000-mile long Ice Age Trail from Interstate Park on the Wisconsin-Minnesota border to Potawatomi State Park in Door County. Another Reuss bill elevated the Ice Age Trail to the status of National Scenic Trail

in 1980. So it was proper and natural that Henry would become known as the Father of the Ice Age Trail.

Whether he was working in Washington, or living in Wisconsin, Maryland or in California, Henry's spirit was never far from the Ice Age Trail. In typical Reuss fashion, he likened it to Rome's Sacred Way or to the Santiago de Compostella Trail, which was created shortly after the year 1,000 to guide the steps of religious pilgrims in France and Spain.

Over the years, Henry, tireless advocate that he was, hiked portions of the Ice Age Trail with the late William O. Douglas, Justice of the of the US Supreme Court, with Secretaries of the Interior Rogers Morton and Stewart Udall and with a number of Wisconsin's governors.

On his last visit, to dedicate the refurbished Hartland Marsh as a gem along the Trail, his legs had given out to the extent that he could not hike. But his enthusiasm for the Trail and its people was rich as usual. During the dedication Henry grandly referred to Christine Thisted, executive director of the Ice Age Park & Trail Foundation and recipient until recently of many of his evening phone calls from California, as the "Rachel Carson




Henry S. Reuss

Photo

of the marsh and the Mother Theresa of the Ice Age Trail." It is a label she wears proudly, like an Olympic gold medal.

Those of us who were lucky enough to receive Henry's phone calls remember how passionately he wanted the Ice Age Trail completed so that, as he once said, a "squirrel might traverse the Kettle Moraine from one end to the other for 125 miles, tree to tree, never once having to touch the ground," presumably while we humans walked on a well-trod path in the shade below the leafy canopy.

All of this leads to the speculation that if the great Wisconsin glacier, the source of the landscape Henry loved, had persisted for another 10,000 years, it would have met its match in Henry Reuss. It would have been thawed by the warmth of the Reuss heart, a warmth that all of us will continue to bask in, whether we are aware of it or not, when we hike the Ice Age Trail. 

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Mammoth Tales is published quarterly by the Ice Age Park & Trail Foundation, Inc. for its members and friends. Together with the National Park Service, DNR, local units of government and over 5,000 volunteers from around the state, the Foundation works to preserve Wisconsin's glacial heritage through the development of the Ice Age National and State Scenic Trail.

The Foundation welcomes your comments. Send them to *Mammoth Tales*, c/o Ice Age Park & Trail Foundation, 207 E. Buffalo St., Suite 515, Milwaukee, WI 53202-5712. Or, e-mail to christine@iceagetrail.org.

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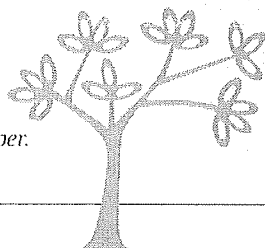
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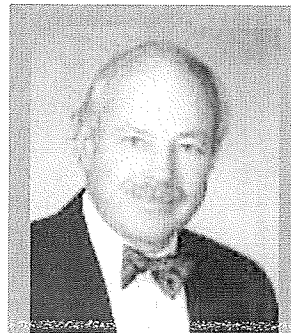
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President's REPORT

The End of an Era

Ray Zillmer is acknowledged as the originator of the idea of the Ice Age Trail as well as the founder of the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation. However the late Henry Reuss can certainly be characterized as the godfather of the Trail.



by Thomas J. Drought

Although they had been friends for some time it was in 1958 when then Congressman Henry Reuss met with Ray to discuss Ray's idea of setting up a national park to be called The Wisconsin Glacier National Forest Park to stretch for 1,000 miles across Wisconsin, following the moraines and other glacial land forms left by the Wisconsin glacier.

Presumably this was the beginning of Henry's involvement with the Ice Age Trail. Later that year Ray led a group of enthusiasts including Henry over the route of his projected park traveling from the Wade House in Greenbush in the North Kettle Moraine to the St. Croix River in northwestern Wisconsin. Henry was asked to get the National Park Service to do a study of the project's feasibility.

The National Park Service concluded that a thousand mile national park would be too difficult to administer and recommended instead a national scientific reserve of nine significant geologic formations along the route. This reserve would be administered by the National Park Service and

the State of Wisconsin.

Henry's bill to create the Ice Age Reserve became law on October 13, 1964. The Act's stated purpose was "to assure protection, preservation, and interpretation of the nationally significant features of the Wisconsin glaciation, including moraines, eskers, kames, kettle holes, swamps, lakes, and other reminders of the Ice Age."

Henry Reuss was born and raised in Milwaukee. He graduated third in his class from Harvard Law School in 1936, worked in Milwaukee and Washington and in 1943 volunteered for service as an Army private. He was promoted to the rank of Major and was awarded a Bronze Star.

After returning to Milwaukee to practice law, his first campaign for public office was in 1948. He ran for mayor but

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lost to Frank Zeidler. After working on the Marshall Plan in Paris he ran unsuccessfully for Wisconsin Attorney General in 1950 and thereafter lost a challenge to Senator Joe McCarthy in 1952. He was first elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1954 and served continuously until 1983 when he retired from public life. (In 1960 he ran again for Milwaukee mayor but lost to Henry Maier.)

How did this man who became Chair of the House's powerful Banking, Currency and Housing Committee as well as the Congressional Joint Economic Committee and who was a principal architect of the Peace Corps (together with Senator Hubert Humphrey and President John Kennedy) become interested in the environment and particularly the Ice Age National Scenic Trail? Although Henry had been an enthusiastic outdoorsman all his life (in the 1960s he set up the Congressional Subcommittee on Conservation), perhaps this interest was a result of his early discussions and hikes with Ray Zillmer, particularly in the Kettle Moraine. Henry stated "The Kettle Moraine is Wisconsin's Grand Canyon and Yosemite." He declared this area to be "Wisconsin's No. 1 jewel."

According to Henry, "Saving our Ice Age heritage has come in the nick of time. Gasoline for trips to the Appalachians and Rockies is costly, suggesting that joys closer at hand need to be explored. And the new awareness of physical and mental health calls for an enhanced opportunity to stretch a leg and to breathe clean air close to home."

Following Henry's bill to create the Ice Age Reserve in 1964, volunteers of the Ice Age Trail chapters, which were then being formed across the state, began to actually lay out the Trail. In 1980 Henry published his guidebook *On the Trail of the Ice Age* which remains to this day the definitive work on the history, geologic formations and route

of the Trail. The book describes Henry's dream of "solitude for the multitude." (The proceeds of the guidebook are used entirely to improve the Trail.) Also in 1980 Congress designated the Ice Age Trail as a national scenic trail in the same category as the better known Appalachian and Pacific Crest National Scenic Trails. The law directed that the Trail follow the route outlined in Henry's guidebook.

In 1996 Henry presented a "poem" at the dedication of 90 miles of the newly-opened Ice Age Trail in northwest Wisconsin. (Henry Reuss stated that "Henry Wadsworth Longfellow must have turned in his grave.") The poem is as follows:

Henry's interest in the Ice Age Trail continued from 1958 to his death. As reported on the cover story by Paul

*Near the shores of Gitche Gumeé
In the Indian Head dominion
Ten thousand years ago the glacier
Melted as the globe grew warm.
(Gas-guzzlers, have a care, please,
Lest global warming come again!)
Now the sons of Hiawatha
Saw this treasure at their doorstep,
Saw the need to keep it pristine,
Open just to fresh-faced hikers,
Babes in back-packs, nimble geezers.
In grand pow-wow the Ice Age zealots
Vowed to save the glacial land-forms,
Pledged to build a sylvan pathway
Through the ninety miles of forest.
And so on.*

Hayes in this issue of *Mammoth Tales* Henry was in continual contact with the officers and staff of the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation in its efforts to complete the Trail throughout the state.

He was also extremely generous in his financial support of the Trail. Henry served as a director and vice president of the Foundation. Although his interest was statewide, his particular love was

the Kettle Moraine. Henry stated "Nowhere is Wisconsin's Ice Age heritage more striking than in the Kettle Moraine forest of Waukesha and Washington Counties." He described this area as 90 miles over moraines, drumlins, eskers and kames the glacier had left. Henry quoted the 1996 study of the Kettle Moraine as follows:

"Because its soil is unsuitable for most farming, the Kettle Moraine remained much as it was when the first settlers saw it. In the 1930s, farsighted citizens of Wisconsin ... created the Kettle Moraine State Forest, originally intended to span the entire 90 miles from north to south ..."

Henry notes that during the time he served in Congress the era 1958-1972 was a significant one for the environment including federal clean air

and clean water legislation, the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Council of Environmental Advisers, expansion of the national park system and passage of the Wilderness Act. However, of all of these environmental issues Henry's foremost interest during his career in Congress and thereafter was the Ice Age Trail. The story about Henry in *The Milwaukee Journal/Sentinel* shortly after his death features a picture of Henry leading other cross-country skiers on the Trail.

The Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation will continue and the Trail will someday be completed

but perhaps not as soon or not as well as it would be if Henry were here to provide his guidance and support. We all owe Henry a significant debt of gratitude for all he has done for the Trail. He will be truly missed. 🐾