

Getting back to basics outdoors

"Everytime we loaded the canoe to go somewhere," Harold 'Bud' Jordahl was remembering, "my father-in-law — who, by the way, is now 85 and the son of Scandinavian immigrants — he'd take a look at me and say: 'That's too much stuff, Bud.'"

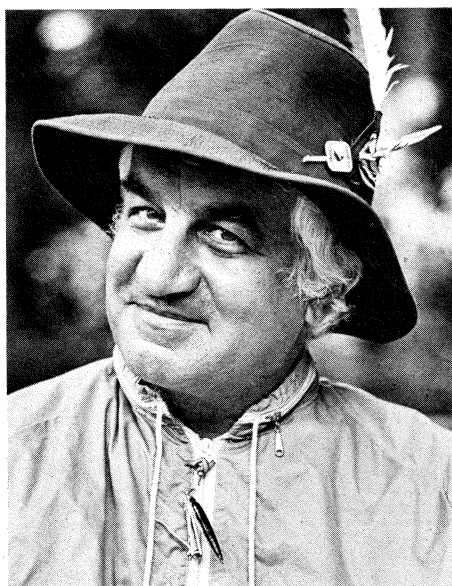
As Bud Jordahl sipped his coffee, I thought of my own father, The Old Man, who, over a lifetime of hunting and fishing had accumulated a garageful of gear that had finally forced the car outside under the pines. But in his last years, he had sallied forth to stalk walleyes on the Chain of Lakes with his equipage pared down to two spinning rods, a minnow bucket and the rest of his fishing gear tucked into the lefthand pocket of his faded railroad jacket. There would be a sandwich tucked into the righthand pocket, along with a piece of fruit. He usually came back with all of the food gone, some of the minnows and a stringer full of fish.

"And the older I get," Bud Jordahl continued, "the more I find that the less equipment, the fewer accoutrements, the better. Whatever you do outdoors, you want to do it easily, and you can do it easily with less stuff. Just get up and go do it."

Simplify, simplify, Henry David Thoreau had warned us all from Walden Pond. A lot of folks, then and now, put Henry down as some kind of nut, yelling "fire" in a fireproof theatre.

But more and more folks are agreeing with Henry, not just Bud Jordahl who served on the Natural Resources Board from 1972 to 1977 including a term as chairman. Among those are even people whose main outdoor activity is simply watching the DNR — like a hawk. Newspaper editors are among such people. Indeed, it was the front page editorial in *The Milwaukee Journal* on the DNR that Bud and I were discussing this Sunday

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evening. That, and his Horicon goose hunt with his young son, Jordie. It was Bud's first goose hunt in 22 years. It was Jordie's first ever. Both father and son got a Canada apiece and Jordie's was bigger.

The *Journal* editorial was titled: "Something's nibbling at your lifestyle" and it started out by saying some of our state parks may be closed down next year and some scenic trails won't be fixed up for biking after all. Muskie fishing is apt to decline eventually, likewise for boating and camping opportunities.

Inflation is eating away at just about everything done by the DNR and that made it tough to plan a DNR budget for 1981-83. The Dreyfus administration had told all state agencies to plan for no more than a 4 percent increase in money and inflation was running much higher than that.

"So," the editorial had it in black-and-white, "welcome to the era of cutbacks, a time of hard choices."

Bud Jordahl sees three things happening when the DNR Board bites the bullet:

- The recreationist will have to pay more in user fees.
- There will be less development on state lands and forests.
- People will go to less expensive, more passive forms of recreation.

"Client groups," Bud says, talking DNR's language, "are still going to want stocked birds, stocked fish and all the rest of it. And that's fine, but they're going to have to pay a lot more now and I think that's what the Board is saying."

He feels that public lands can be used, without a great deal of expense and improvement, for passive forms of recreation. Bud's basic rule of thumb is: If it doesn't require motorization, your sport is probably passive. Canoeing is passive. Water skiing is not.

"Canoeing," Bud emphasizes, "cross country skiing, rock hunting, hiking, nature study, bird watching are in that passive category. Even walking. Especially walking."

It's all a blessing in disguise, he insists. It's simply getting back to nature, back to basics.

"As we go to more and more passive forms of recreation," he says, "the recreation experience will be enhanced. You can still sweat out there and you relate to your environment in a very real way."

Bud said one of the most exciting ideas entertained by professionals today was the notion of corridors. The UW's Phillip Lewis has been a longtime proponent of corridors as opposed to sites specific.

"Corridors," Bud said, "linear corridors. Along streams. Along rivers. Along highways. The Ice Age Trail is a corridor. A park is a site specific."

Bud points to the Scandinavian countries where you can step out of your house into a corridor and hike or cross country ski for literally hundreds and hundreds of miles, from Helsinki to the Arctic. It's the result of what the Scandinavians call *everyman's right*,

the right of every person to tramp around in nature without the nominal boundary lines raised as barriers. You can tell Bud's proud it's Scandinavian.

"We should be planning for quiet corridors here," he says. "I argued for that on the St. Croix River. On the St. Croix and the Namekagon, we have a 185-mile long strip. In there, we should eliminate the chainsaws, the snowmobiles, the outboards. Noise, man-made noise, totally destroys your outdoors experience."

"Only when one comes to listen," another Scandinavian named Sigurd Olson had written, "only when one is aware and still, can things be seen and heard. Everyone has a listening-point somewhere. It does not have to be in the north or close to the wilderness, but some place of quiet where the universe can be contemplated with awe."

"You know," Bud said, "it was 9:30 a.m. in that hay bale blind when Jordie said: 'I don't care if we never get a goose, dad.' We had seen an eagle. A red tail hawk. A marsh hawk. Hundreds of ducks. Thousands of blackbirds, swarming like bees over the marsh. And thousands of geese. It was just beautiful. We could have packed up our stuff and gone home then. Jordie would have been happy to go. And so would I." ■