

# Bud Jordahl

Saving and managing the resources

—by George Vukelich—

**H**AROLD (BUD) JORDAHL, dean of Wisconsin environmentalists, has taken to retirement like the largemouth bass have taken to his Richland County farm ponds, the grouse to the hillsides, the deer to the valleys.

"I've always been a farmer at heart," the emeritus professor admits. "Now, I can be out here all the time."

With retirement from the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in September, Jordahl *could* spend his days on the farm, but instead he works nearly full time in his office in the Old Music Hall, writing a resource history book on the Apostle Islands, counseling with students and continuing with his current environmental battle—the fight to put the lower Wisconsin River into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Jordahl's private land is a 240-acre, once worn-out hill farm in Richland County that he bought twenty years ago and has been nursing back to health ever since. The farm enables him to put into practice the environmental stewardship he has been preaching all his life.

"We're trying to accomplish some of the things that Aldo Leopold wrote about in *A Sand County Almanac*, managing the land prudently and wisely and, hopefully, with some ecological insight."

Basically, he says, that's just working *with* nature, an idea that he feels was imprinted on him as a boy growing up in the small community of MacIntosh, Minnesota—"seven hundred people on the edge of the prairie to the west and the deciduous boreal forest to the east."

His father, in those Great Depression days of the 1930s, was the school superintendent and a great hunter and fisherman. Later, he would become a book salesman and move the family to Minneapolis and then to Findlay, Ohio. He would also sell his treasured Remington shotgun for \$20 and give the sale money to Bud so that his son

could buy his very first, a 16 gauge shotgun.

Jordahl remembers that they hunted prairie grouse, sharptail, pheasants and ducks, but it's not the actual shooting that he recounts.

"It's the visual scenes I treasure," he says. "On the prairie, it was the cornshocks, the cloudy, hazy sky and the grouse sailing. On a northern lake hunting ducks, it was the cold fall days, the marsh vegetation stiff with frost and when the birds came in, you could hear the whistling of their wings, which was a totally new experience for me. You were really part of a wild world."

## Preserving the pristine ecologies of the Apostle Islands region and the St. Croix River are spectacular environmental successes.

Looking off into the hills of his own land now, he talks about its importance to the entire family. His wife, Marilyn; daughters Kris, 30, and Kari, 28; and son Jordy, 20, are all equally attached. Jordy, now a junior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, expressed a proprietary interest in the farm a long time ago. They were standing together on one of the farm's gullied hillsides, Jordahl recalls.

"I was a little discouraged at the time," he admits, "about the enormous amounts of work and energy and money a place like this takes and I said to Jordy: 'Why don't we just sell it and we'll take a trip to the Caribbean.' Jordy said: 'Sell this place? Are

you nuts?' He couldn't have been more than six or seven," Jordahl says, still beaming at the memory.

"Managing the resources" has always fascinated Jordahl. His degrees in forestry from the University of Michigan—a bachelor's and a master's—prepared him for the hands-on job of managing trees and their environments. Cruising the timber. Working in the laboratory. Working for the old Wisconsin Conservation Department as a game manager in Viroqua and Black River Falls, and as a game biologist in Spooner. Managing pine trees and grouse and white-tail deer and discovering that before you could "manage" the resource, you had to make sure that the resource got preserved, got saved, in the first place.

"All the resources we were managing," he says, "were pieces of a larger whole, and that larger whole is Nature. No one knew the word "ecology" back then, but that's what dealing with that larger whole is. Ecology. That gets you thinking that it's not enough to just save the ducks—you also have to save the ponds and the potholes. Then you realize that it's not enough to just save the ponds and the potholes, you also have to save the planet."

Jordahl has helped save some of the best parts of the planet, particularly, the Apostle Islands region and the St. Croix River. He did it when he was prowling the political thicket as confidant and environmental "point man" for Governor, and then later, U.S. Senator, Gaylord Nelson. Jordahl says that the credit for "saving" the Apostle Islands as a national lakeshore and the St. Croix as a wilderness river really belongs to Nelson, who now heads The Wilderness Society in Washington, D.C.

"Oh, we all helped him on those projects," Jordahl says, "Martin and Louie Hanson up in Mellen. Sigurd Olson up in Ely. I got some figures together. But it was Gaylord who convinced the Senate. He even got President Kennedy to fly up to the Apostles, and the President made



Although he is “officially” retired, Wisconsin environmentalist Bud Jordahl continues to divide his time between his Richland County farm and his University of Wisconsin office.

a great speech in Ashland supporting Gaylord’s bill.”

Jordahl has cardboard boxes overflowing with reams of reports, studies, statements, affidavits—the yellowing papers that document the long struggle to make the Apostle Islands a National Lakeshore.

Today, without the power base he once held in the U.S. Department of the Interior under Secretary Stewart Udall, Jordahl continues the fight to put the lower Wisconsin River into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The section in question runs from Prairie du Sac to Wyalusing, some ninety-three miles, and Jordahl confesses that sometimes he feels as though he’s out there in the midchannel current without a paddle.

The project started in the mid-1970s, when he was chairman of the Natural Resources Board. And as the passage of time attests there has been considerable foot dragging. Only in September of 1988 did the final environmental impact statement surface for public review. The Natural Resources Board is scheduled to consider the proposal in November or December 1988.

What the DNR proposes is the fee-simple acquisition of lands along the river by the state, and then tying that together with the nine state-owned wildlife areas and two state parks along the river into one contiguous package.

The DNR plan also proposes zoning and easements to protect the scenic bluffs “as you look at them from the river in a canoe.”

Preserving the pristine ecologies of the Apostle Island region and the St. Croix River are spectacular environmental successes, and his work on the lower Wisconsin promises to be, but Jordahl is just as proud of other “earth work” that he feels is every bit as important, but never got the publicity.

“I worked with Gaylord when he was

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governor,” Jordahl recalls, “providing authorizations and monies for stream bank easement acquisitions. This was acquiring rights for the public to fish, to walk, to wade a stream and these rights applied sixty-six feet from the center of the stream.”

Jordahl’s eyes light up because he is homing in on one of the subjects dearest to his heart. Hunting is probably the first. But “habitat” is not far behind. In his chino shirt and pants, he looks now like a warden about to read you your rights.

“Not only were we acquiring rights for the public,” he continues, “we were also protecting the stream bank, which was the most important thing that could be done. We were letting the stream bank grow up naturally into flowering shrubs and herbacious vegetation. We were keeping the cattle out. That gives you a much greater dividend than just putting fish into a stream each year.”

His environment experiences—“in the field and in the front office”—have soured

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## Bud Jordahl

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him on "planting fish and stocking wildlife." He broke in with the old Conservation Department and remembers releasing "tame" pheasants raised at the Poynette Game Farm, birds that were "too dumb to come in out of the rain or the sleet or whatever." Later, as director of the Department of Resource Development, the forerunner of today's DNR, he remembers the fishing groups and the resort associations lobbying for more planted trout, more planted wall-eyes, more planted muskies. There wasn't much lobbying for "better habitat."

"Stocking programs have tremendous support from the tourist industry, walleye stocking and so on. But, the 'balance' of a lake is shot when you plant fish in there. You have a domesticated strain competing with a wild strain for the same food base and there's probably genetic deterioration."

He admits that the stocking of salmon in the Great Lakes is a runaway success and the salmon program "couldn't be stopped now if we used gunboats." But, he adds, it's just one more example of another thing that's being "shot" by stocking, and that is the "outdoors ethic."

"What we've done," Jordahl says, "is create enormous numbers of people who now expect the stocking programs, who now expect instant gratification and who have no understanding of habitat, of biology, of the fishery. The interest of most people is to go out and catch as many fish as they can and bring them home. Or ducks or pheasants or whatever."

He says that goes double for the Wisconsin deer hunt, and then he defines the deer hunt because this is a bigger burr in his britches than the pheasants.

"First off," he says, "it's not a deer hunt. It's a deer kill. Wisconsin kills more deer each year than probably any other state, and you could say: 'Well, that's a good management program. We're doing a hell of a job.' But I don't agree with it."

Jordahl argues that the emphasis has been on the number of deer killed and not on the "quality of the hunt." You don't throw 650,000 hunters into the field on a Saturday morning in November, he scoffs, to go deer "hunting." It becomes a "killing field." How can you have hunting ethics with crowds like that? When you get 650,000 people of any persuasion together, he insists, ethics will be the last thing anybody worries about.

"Almost forty years ago," he remembers, "it was about 1951, I went up to Spooner to work with Burt Dahlberg, one of the really fine game ecologists and prob-

ably the outstanding expert in the whole country on the management of whitetail deer. Later, he wrote the book *Wisconsin Whitetail Deer* which is still a great benchmark study.

"Burt was saying then that we've got to have earlier seasons in the north and they should be longer seasons if we're going to have a quality hunt. Spread the hunters out over two or three weeks and let's do it earlier before the snows come and the horrendous cold temperatures. That was 1951 and what's the state considering today in 1988? A little longer deer season in northwest Wisconsin and they're running into all kinds of flack."

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Jordahl's definition of a quality deer hunt is first and foremost the opportunity to hunt in an area where you are relatively undisturbed by other hunters. One hunter to every forty acres would seem a reasonable ratio, he offers.

Jordahl believes that because of "people pressures," the Department of Natural Resources simply has to "regulate" the deer hunt just as access to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area is regulated in Minnesota.

"That means," he says, "you have to tell people when they can go and to what part of the state they can go to. Absolutely! That would begin to bring some quality back into deer hunting."

While he concedes that DNR does a good job with its hunting safety courses, that's a limited education.

"Why not a course in hunting ethics?" he asks. "That's what hunting is all about."

Jordahl stops and gazes at the land over which he has, as he puts it, "temporary stewardship, very temporary." He looks over the little pond in which the family planted the black bass. He looks at the worn-out pastures where the family planted trees by hand. He looks at the eroded hills where the family planted alfalfa to bind the soil and heal the land.

"Ethics," Emeritus Professor Harold Jordahl says again. "That's what everything is about down here." ✍

*George Vukelich is a Madison-based writer, and author of North Country Notebook.*

## Schreiner's

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mann, who supervises the wait staff, has been punching the same clock since 1946, and people with ten years' experience are common. It shows: if you take the time to notice, you get the impression of terrific efficiency, of authentic teamwork. And even on the busiest days, personal attention isn't sacrificed in the name of precision. There's no cool, impersonal service at Schreiner's. "We consider ourselves a big family," says Bernie. "We're all proud to be part of it."

Of course, the ultimate standard of quality, in any restaurant, is the food. And when most people think of Schreiner's, they think of two famous items: pecan rolls and clam chowder. The pecan rolls began as an "experiment" at Bernie's previous eatery in Marinette; now, his bakers fire their ovens at 3:00 A.M. to supply the daily demand for thirty-to-forty dozen. Summers, that figure climbs to fifty dozen, not to mention countless cinnamon rolls, dinner rolls, and up to 125 pies.

If it seems strange that New England clam chowder should be a Wisconsin restaurant's claim to fame, it's only because the original needed improvement. Bernie tells the story: "My parents took a trip east in 1957. Somewhere along the Pennsylvania Turnpike, they stopped at a Howard Johnson's and had clam chowder. It was good, but my mother thought she could do better. She started from scratch, using her cook's intuition, and she made the staff and the regular customers eat clam chowder on the house until she got it where she wanted it. We sell tons of it in the restaurant, and we sell fifty-to-sixty thousand containers of frozen chowder from our store in the lobby." Feel free to season your chowder to taste: even the boss has been known to add a dash of Tabasco.

Schreiner's has become an institution, not only to the people of Fond du Lac, but to the thousands of motorists who punctuate their travels by dining there. How does Bernie Schreiner do it? "You have to have a love affair with your restaurant," he says. "After all these years, I still do." ✍

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