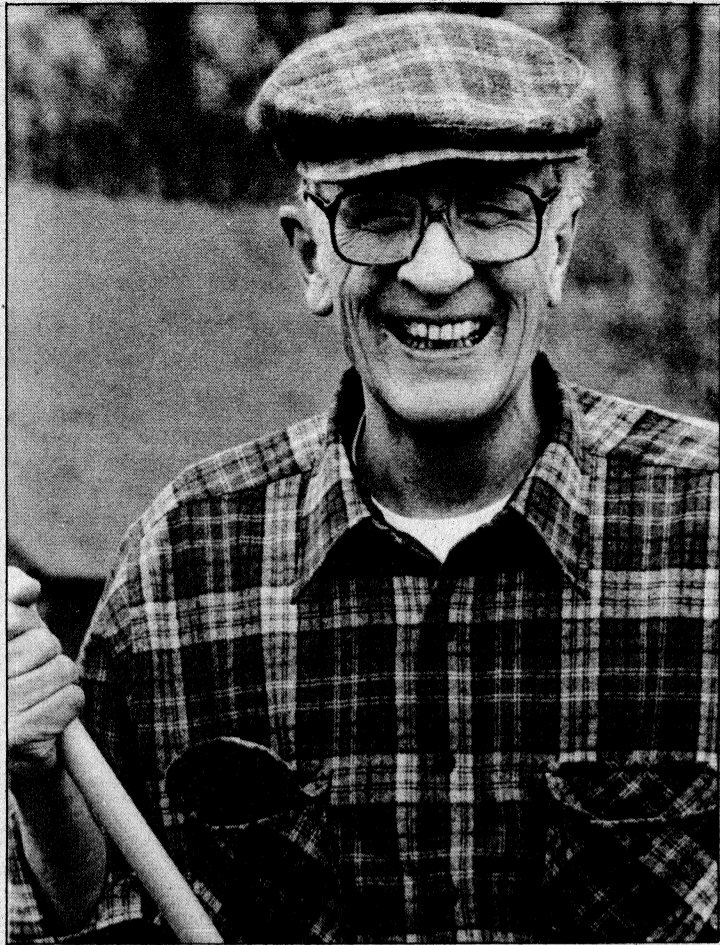


Harold 'Bud' Jordahl.
Photo by
Brent Nicastro



'I'll Never Forget It'

Harold C. Jordahl, Jr., was appointed by then-Gov. Gaylord Nelson to head the old Department of Resource Development, forerunner of today's DNR. From 1972 to 1977 he served on the DNR Board, including a term as chairman. He is a professor of regional planning at the UW-Extension in Madison. His family and the whole world call him "Bud."

...

"Gaylord really put Earth Day together. He was a Senator then, traveling, giving speeches to student groups—there was a lot



Listening In with George Vukelich

of unrest. This was the time of Vietnam, civil rights—and he really picked up the idea from students on the West Coast.

"I was on the national committee for Earth Day. John Heritage—he's now press secretary for Dave Obey—and I did the bulk of the work. I'll never forget it. Earth Day was April 22, 1970, and April 22 turns out to be Lenin's birthday, which lent credence to the theory that the whole thing was a Communist plot.

"Earth Day heightened awareness of the environment. Some of the young people involved then have gone on to leadership in various environmental groups, and the groups have changed.

"Prior to Earth Day, you had various conservation organizations usually built around one concept: the Wilderness Society was concerned with wilderness, the National Wildlife Federation with hunting, the Sport Fishing Institute with fishing, the National Parks Association with parks, the American Forestry Association with forests. Well, Earth Day broadened their focus, especially with the young people. The young people weren't oriented to the old environmental bureaucracies.

"The membership of all the national conservation organizations has increased enormously in the last 10 to 15 years. Mr. Watt and Mr. Reagan have helped in the last couple of years, of course, but the growth prior to them, I think, is a result of Earth Day. The Audubon Society is a good example. Their membership has just broadened and they've become more militant. The Sierra Club, too.

"The purpose of E-Day was 'educational,' and education is fine, but you had to get into where the decisions were being made, where the deals were being cut. An excellent example of that is the Environmental Decade right here in Wisconsin. Its declared purpose is to get down in the trenches and do some real fighting.

"Earth Day provided a base of support for those of us in academia. On this campus

now, we have an Institute for Environmental Studies. We were all able to break out of our little disciplinary boxes and talk to each other, so various disciplines could come together and work on problems. This has improved the climate for 'Ecology,' not only here, but on other campuses as well.

"Perhaps Earth Day's most lasting contribution is that it provided a hell of a lot of momentum for putting the basic body of environmental law together. I don't think an Earth Day could happen today, but part of the reason is that we've institutionalized a lot of E-Day's original concerns.

"That's what happens with most social movements. The movement gets institutionalized—co-opted, some would say—and it becomes part of the establishment's agenda. True, the Reagan administration is trying to tear apart the nation's environmental agenda, but I think that's only temporary.

"Once in a while, you get a President who breaks faith with the American people and now we've got one of those presidents. Reagan is the first president since JFK who hasn't sent at least one special message on the environment to the Congress.

"You know, his record as governor of California is a hell of a lot better than his record as President, but he had a different constituency then. His national constituency includes the mountain states 'sagebrush rebellion' people, and they gave us James Watt and Anne Gorsuch Burford.

"You read 'The Education of David Stockman' in the Atlantic, and he lays it out for this administration. Stockman said: 'We use the budget for policy purposes.' Usually, when Congress cuts back on programs, the procedure is to hold hearings in the subcommittees and you have discussions. When the administration just knocks out programs and commissions in the budget, that terminates things in a hurry. Everything that Reagan eliminates we're gonna have to go back and rebuild from scratch. And we will."