

## Featured Alumni: Gaylord A. Nelson ('42)

*Timothy R. Verhoff*

Though, for a period of some four decades, I have concerned myself with environmental and resource issues, early on I realized the more I learned, the less I knew. This is so because the subject matter is all-encompassing. It includes our life sustaining resource base—the air, water, minerals, soil, forests, oceans, lakes, rivers, all others, plus economics, politics, religion, culture, and philosophy. This is a political scientific mix of incredible complexity. And though we will never know or understand more than a small bit about the endless intricacies of nature's works, we can learn and preserve a livable habitat. The overall general guiding principle can be stated in many ways. The proposition is, quite simply, that we must conduct our activities in such a way as to protect the integrity of the ecosystem and its resources which sustain life and determine its physical quality. Minimum achievable interference with natural systems must be our guide line. It is this resource base that defines the habitat and determines the limitations for survival of all species, plant and animal, within our world ecosystem.

—Senator Gaylord Nelson

Most Americans do not anticipate April 22 as much as December 25 or July 4. The occasion is not celebrated with gift exchanges or fireworks, but it is celebrated. On April 22 sights, not often seen in this country, occur. Entire communities turn out for speeches about our environment. Citizens pick up the rubbish around their neighborhood, and families plant saplings in their front yard. No, April 22 is not Arbor Day. It's Earth Day. And about twenty years ago, a young Senator from Wisconsin, Gaylord Nelson, created it.

Born in Clear Lake, Wisconsin, Nelson was the son of country doctor, Anton Nelson. He attended San Jose State College and studied economics and anthropology. After receiving his B.A. in 1939, Nelson decided to attend law school, a goal he had as a young boy. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 1942 and enlisted in the army, serving as a First Lieutenant during World War II.

Returning to the United States in 1946, Nelson decided to enter the political

arena. "Our family was always active in politics," Nelson said. "My mother was on the executive board of the La Follette Progressive Party. I was raised in politics and interested in it from the time I was in grade school. When I got out of the Army, I ran for the Assembly as a La Follette supporter but lost."

But Nelson was not discouraged. He came to Madison, joining the Beggs & Lawton law firm, and immediately became active in politics around Dane County. "In 1948 all the young progressives in the Progressive Party took over the Democratic Party. I ran for State Senate in 1948 and won. Then, I became Chairman of the State Democratic Party in 1949," Nelson noted.

In 1958 Nelson ran for Governor. "I had been in the Senate for ten years. I decided that I was either going to start practicing law full-time or keep going with politics. I ran for governor, expecting that I would be defeated, but I won," Nelson said. He was re-elected in 1960, and decided to run for the United States Senate in 1962.

Remembered as a champion of the environment and father of Earth Day, Nelson began crusading for the environment while still in the State Senate. "The environment wasn't much of a political issue back in those days. I made some environmental proposals while I was in the legislature. I initiated the Outdoor Recreation Acquisition Program. We purchased one million acres of recreation and wildlife areas," he said.

Switching positions from Governor to Senator challenged Nelson. "When you are the governor, you are the chief executive officer in charge of the executive branch. You are also the chief legislator because you propose the budget and all other kinds of things," Nelson maintained.

"But in the U.S. Senate, you are strictly a legislator. As governor you can make proposals and make sure the legislature considers them, whether they pass them or not. Whereas, when you are in the U.S. Senate, you have two houses of Congress, 535 people to work with, so it's a different position. There are things you can't do as a legislator, and some of the things you can do take a long time."

While in the Senate, Nelson proposed several precedent-setting bills such as the



Gaylord A. Nelson

Traffic Safety Act of 1966, which set minimum safety standards for autos and tires and called for federal research into the design of prototype safe cars.

But Nelson always kept the environment close to his heart. He managed to pass several bills which helped the environment: Operation Mainstream and Green Thumb, which employs the elderly in conservation projects; The Apostle Islands National Lakeshore Act, which preserves part of the Lake Superior shoreline and 21 Apostle Islands within the national park system; The Saint Croix Wild and Scenic Riverway, which allowed the Saint Croix River to become part of the National Wild and Scenic River System; The National Environmental Education Act; and he authored legislation to preserve the 2,000

**The pathetic dearth of political leadership, not the lack of scientific or technical knowledge, is the single most important stumbling block to progress. Scientific data is quite useless without imaginative, dedicated political leadership.**

mile Appalachian Trail.

Nelson also introduced the first legislation in Congress to mandate fuel efficiency standards in automobiles, control strip mining, ban the use of DDT, ban the use of agent orange, and ban the use of phosphates in detergents.

Along with these achievements, he created Earth Day. "In 1962 when I was Governor of Wisconsin, I made a special trip to Washington to meet with Bob Kennedy to suggest that he persuade President Kennedy to do a nationwide environmental tour. My hope was that a presidential tour would move this issue into the national political arena," he recalled.

"Again in 1963, I discussed the tour idea with Bob Kennedy. Finally, the President decided to make the conservation tour and requested I send him some ideas. For many reasons, the tour did not achieve what I had hoped: forcing the

issue into the political arena. During the next seven years I spoke in some 37 states on the environment and continued to search for some ideas that would make it a national issue."

"Finally," he continued, "the idea for a national environmental celebration occurred to me while on a conservation speaking tour in July, 1969. As I was flying to Berkeley for a conservation conference, I read an article about the anti-war teach-ins that Vietnam protesters were using as a public education tool. Suddenly, it occurred to me. Why not set aside a day for a nationwide teach-in on the environment? When I returned to Washington in early August, I created a non-profit organization to manage Earth Day, drew up Earth Day plans, selected a board of directors and raised the funds to get started. Once the event was announced in Seattle, there was a remarkable grass roots response that grew into an enormous celebration involving some 20 million people on April 22."

How does Nelson feel about Earth Day now, almost two decades after it was conceived? "It's rewarding to know that it is a mainstream issue. It got the attention of the politicians. Now we can start dealing more effectively with environmental issues."

Nelson even had an opportunity to run for vice-president, but when George McGovern asked him, Nelson declined. "He called me from the Convention and asked if I would be interested in running for vice-president. I was never interested in that position. I'd rather be a U.S. Senator than vice-president."

In 1980, Nelson was upended in the Senate race by Bob Kasten. Never bitter, Nelson maintains that his loss was actually a great stroke of luck. "After the election was over, Bill Turnage asked me to join the Wilderness Society. Even if I had been elected, I wouldn't have run for reelection in 1986. Now, I have a wonderful job doing full time work on environmental matters. We specialize in national parks, national forests, wildlife refuges. I wouldn't want to go back to the U.S. Senate. I enjoyed it, but 32 years in public office is long enough."

Nelson believes that the environment has improved in some areas. But overall, it is still on a decline. "Generally speaking," said Nelson, "most people would

say that exponential population growth is the most serious problem that the world faces. We are now at 5 billion, and in 40 years there will be 10 billion people. There is also a lack of an environmental ethic in our culture. These are the two greatest problems, but there are also major problems with air pollution, water pollution, ocean pollution, hazardous waste dumps, pesticides, herbicides, soil erosion, deforestation, and the list goes on."

In the face of this dire situation, Nelson has a plan. "First, we must begin a carefully designed economic-environmental program with the objective of creating an environmentally sustainable economy. That is to say, an economy that is not fueled by consuming our capital. Second we must nurture a 'conservation generation,' imbued in heart and mind with a strong conservation ethic. And the third ingredient is leadership—far sighted and bold leadership," he contended.

Nelson says that we can change the environmental situation, but without political leadership, it may be impossible. "The pathetic dearth of political leadership, not the lack of scientific or technical knowledge, is the single most important stumbling block to progress. Scientific data is quite useless without imaginative, dedicated political leadership. The public recognizes how serious the problem is, and they are prepared to do something. However, if the President does not say we have got to start major conservation today, we are headed into disaster," Nelson maintained.

According to Nelson, The United States and the Soviet Union should mutually reduce military expenditures by 50 percent in the next ten years and another 50 percent in the following decade. He believes that half of the annual savings should be allocated to efforts to save the environment. "This is not unilateral disarmament. It is not idealism run amok," he said. "It's hard-nosed realism. How much longer are we and the Soviet Union going to waste a total of \$600 billion a year on weapon systems that put us both in greater jeopardy, while degrading and destroying the very resource base that sustains us? The Cold War is over. It is time to stop the arms race and begin the race to save the planet."

## Featured Alumni: Ann Walsh Bradley ('76)

*Timothy R. Verhoff*

She is a Renaissance woman of law. During her career, Ann Walsh Bradley has explored several areas of the legal profession. In her own practice, she toiled in the courts, fighting for her clients' justice. Now, as a Circuit Judge for Marathon County, she is deciding justice for others.

After growing up in Richland Center, Wisconsin, Bradley chose to attend Webster College in St. Louis, Missouri. She pursued degrees in both English and religion. And while in college, she spent a semester studying in Jerusalem. "It had an impact on my life," said Bradley, "It gave me an excellent opportunity to explore another culture." In 1972, she graduated and moved to Eau Claire, where she began teaching.

"After I finished college, I taught both English and religion. I taught English at an alternative high school in Eau Claire. Then I taught a sophomore religion class at Aquinas High School in LaCrosse."

While living in Eau Claire, Bradley worked on John Lindsey's 1972 presidential campaign. "I ran a campaign office during the election. I put in long hours and received little pay. With great enthusiasm, I backed a candidate who went nowhere."

Bradley soon decided to attend law school. "I wasn't sure what I really wanted to do, but I knew that a law degree would give me credentials that could open up some avenues of opportunity," she said.

Following her graduation from the Law School in 1976, she worked with Wausau Insurance Company. "I was with them for three years. I primarily worked on personal injury and compensation cases. I liked my job, but I wanted a different challenge. I wanted to open my own law office."

In June, 1979, her wish came true, and she started private practice. "When I opened the doors, I didn't know if I was going to be sitting there reading the newspaper all day or not. It got busy right away, and after the first year, I even had to add another lawyer," Bradley said.

The firm continued to grow, but Bradley decided that it was again time to explore other legal avenues. She left the firm in 1985, when she was appointed Circuit Judge for Marathon County. "As an attorney in a private practice, I

worked primarily in litigation. I was very much involved in the adversary process. The idea is to represent your client as well as you can, and the other side will present the best case they can. The result in the end will be justice," Bradley commented. "I was interested in trying to experience the true meaning of justice from a different perspective than the adversary perspective. I wanted to approach the law as a judge trying to serve justice rather than acting as an adversary searching for a victory," confessed Bradley.

Although she enjoys her work as a judge, Bradley admits that she misses her private practice. "I'm doing what I set out to do, but I do miss that surge of excitement that you get when the jury comes back with the verdict. The income is also substantially less than what I was making in private practice. But other than these two minor aspects, there is no comparison. I can honestly say I love my job."

As a woman on the bench, Bradley is often pegged as a feminist. But she disagrees. "I am interested in administering justice no matter if it is for men or women. I believe that women should have justice, but I'm not going to go out and burn bridges or start riots," she said.

However, she does maintain that there is a lot of discrimination against women in the profession. "It's not so much that female attorneys have a harder time winning cases. Hard work, clients and facts win cases. The discrimination comes not from the jury box, but from within the structure of our system. Look at how many women are partners in large firms, or look at the average wage of a male attorney compared to that of a female attorney."

In addition to putting in long hours at the courthouse, Bradley also cares for her rather large family. She and her husband, attorney Mark Bradley, who graduated from UW Law School in 1977, have four children ages nine, seven, and two that are five years old. The youngest child is an adopted Korean boy. "We went in to adopt a child, and we didn't want to adopt a white child because the waiting list for healthy white children is so long. We put our names on the hard-to-place-children list which is usually made up of minorities or handicapped children. All



Ann Walsh Bradley

of our kids are really great," she said.

Bradley gives her husband a lot of credit for keeping things running. "I can juggle my home, family, and work because I have a wonderful husband who does more than just help out around the house. He is very supportive. We love each other and are very important parts of each other's lives."

When she does find free time, Bradley spends it with her family. "Our family does quite a bit of biking. We especially like to go on long distance rides. We also enjoy downhill skiing, and once a year we take a family vacation."

Bradley plans to run for re-election in 1992. But until then, she'll continue to ladle out justice. "I don't sit back and analyze how I'm doing my work every ten minutes. Instead, I look at it as a larger picture, and I think I'm doing a good job."