

EULOGY



Harvey K. Nelson
1925-2010

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It has been said that the true measure of a man can be defined in three ways: love and devotion to family, compassion and service towards others, and their dedication and commitment to duty. Harvey K. Nelson had all of these qualities in spades!

For 62 years he was a devoted husband to Gene. He was a caring father to Steve, Beth, Pam, and Patti and proud grandfather to Shane, Luke, and Danielle. He nurtured them and watched them grow. Harvey was a devoted family man.

There are only a handful of “special people” who come into each of our lives and influence us in a very special way. Harvey Nelson was without a doubt one of those “special people” who touched so many of us over the years. Throughout all his life’s travels he came into contact with countless numbers of people and he found ways to touch and inspire each and every one of them as only he could. Harvey’s life was **all about** caring for and helping **people**.

Harvey’s dedication and commitment to duty clearly came from some place deep within. He was born in 1925 on a farm near Barrett, Minnesota and raised by his parents John and Selma Nelson in nearby Evansville. He had a brother Wallace and sisters Marlys and Dianne. At that time, the area around Evansville contained some of the best prairie wetland ecosystems in the state and virtually teemed with waterfowl. Harvey loved being outdoors and he spent as much time hunting, trapping, and fishing as he could during his teenage years. I believe it was probably this early exposure to waterfowl and wetlands that nurtured a lifelong passion in Harvey for the conservation and stewardship of our natural resources.

In 1943, Harvey finished high school and joined the U.S. Navy where he served in the South Pacific until the end of World War II. During his service, Harvey was injured by a piece of shrapnel that severed a nerve and resulted in some hearing loss. After the war, he enrolled in the Wildlife Management Program at the University of Minnesota. While in college he met Gene, who was working at a Minneapolis dental office and in 1948 they got married. That served as the connection to Woman Lake since Gene’s parents, Otto and Margaret, ran the fishing resort on Woman Lake. Later Harvey and Gene would acquire several lots and two cabins on the lake. When the kids were growing up, the family spent a lot of time at the lake during the summer.

In 1950, Harvey received his Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife Management and accepted his first job with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge in South Dakota.

In 1953, following his efforts to establish the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, Harvey was hired as the first Refuge Manager. He enrolled in Graduate School at Michigan State University, often traveling to campus after work on the refuge to take classes, and earned a Master of Science Degree in Natural

Resource Conservation. Soon after, he transferred back to his beloved Minnesota.

In the North Central Regional Office, Harvey worked in the Refuges and Wildlife Program and focused on a large number of projects on refuges throughout the Upper Midwest. Harvey's career began to transition into management-level positions, and he worked with an almost unstoppable energy with the long-term goal of waterfowl and wetland conservation for future generations of people to enjoy. Harvey was a visionary!

Harvey clearly understood that the linkages of waterfowl populations to habitat and land-use practices would be critical for their long-term protection and management. He was asked to tackle this mission by establishing a new research facility somewhere in the upper Midwest. In 1963, Harvey selected a site near Jamestown, North Dakota, and was appointed as its first Director. In 1965, building construction was completed for the new Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center and a diverse staff of researchers was assembled to carry out its new mission.

As Center Director, Harvey learned valuable leadership lessons and used his "people skills" to unite staff from several disciplines to work as a team. He worked with his staff to launch waterfowl research programs in Canada and throughout the upper Midwest, and worked tirelessly to maintain support for this new research effort within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. As many researchers at the Center will attest, the sight of Harvey marching down the halls, papers in hand, was often a chilling scene. Everyone knew he was on a mission, and someone was about to receive a new assignment, or be asked to lead a special task. And, no one would ever think of telling Harvey..."No"! You see, Harvey always knew how to get things done!

Throughout Harvey's active life, hunting and fishing traditions and long-term friendships were forged – **Make no mistake, these were of great importance to Harvey!** Several of his annual traditions were initiated over the next few years, including his annual deer hunting trips to Wyoming, waterfowl and pheasant hunting trips to North Dakota, duck hunting trips to Lake Christina, summer family trips to the "Wee Pine Knot" cabin on Woman Lake, and fishing trips to Eagle Lake in Ontario. Since that time, he amassed a substantial amount of gear. No matter where you look, either in his garage, attic, basement, or in the the cabins or house at Woman Lake – you will find lots of Harvey's hunting and fishing stuff. And if you were one of the fortunate few who, in later years, were asked to help Harvey load his truck or boat with his gear, especially his fishing tackle, you know exactly what I mean.

In 1974, Harvey and Gene moved to Virginia and Harvey accepted the position as Associate Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In this capacity, he oversaw the National Wildlife Refuge System, National Fish Hatcheries, Law

Enforcement, Animal Damage Control, and the newly-organized Migratory Bird Program. Without question these were challenging times for Harvey as he assumed more and more responsibility for our Nation's natural resources. But, he never wavered despite this daunting task. Somehow with his boundless energy and leadership skills, meeting after meeting, trip after trip, he moved the Service along a progressive path of science and stewardship.

In 1980, Harvey again returned to Minnesota and this time he accepted the position of Regional Director. He helped put in place new partnership initiatives that would extend wildlife and wetland habitat programs onto private land.

In 1986, with the birth of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Harvey was called upon again, this time to be the Executive Director of the U.S. Office. Harvey quickly assembled a relatively small staff and began the task of establishing Joint Venture Partnerships in critical waterfowl areas in the U.S. Because of Harvey's unique background and experience, he solidified strong partnerships with State and Federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and Canada. Flagship projects were launched and work started with congressional staff to find a funding mechanism for this massive new \$1.5 billion program to conserve and manage North American wetland resources for waterfowl. In 1989, the North American Wetland Conservation Act was passed and the funding was secured.

Yes, Harvey was a visionary but, more importantly, he was a people person! He knew how to bring people together, forge partnerships, build coalitions, and open doors. To Harvey, no good idea was too big to tackle nor too small to ignore! You see, no matter who you were or where you came from, Harvey could always find a place for you and a role for you to play.

After 42 years as a career employee with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Harvey retired in 1992. He received the U.S. Department of the Interior's Distinguished Service Award, which is the highest award an employee can earn. He received an honorary Doctorate Degree from North Dakota State University and over the years received many other awards and recognitions. Most recently he was inducted into the Minnesota Waterfowl Hall of Fame.

But, the inexhaustible energy in Harvey prevailed, and after his retirement from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - he continued his life-long conservation work with the Minnesota Waterfowl Association until his death. He also served on Executive Boards for the Trumpeter Swan Society, Wood Duck Society, Deep Portage Conservation Foundation, and Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Alliance. He leaves a legacy for all to follow in the wildlife conservation community.

Harvey lived a full life that was filled with many far reaching and lasting accomplishments. He had a great family, a rewarding career, and was able to enjoy many outdoor activities throughout his entire life. He maintained many

hunting traditions with friends and family and last year he went duck hunting and made his annual trip to Eagle Lake. He hunted deer in Minnesota last year and was able to climb into his deer stand and still had the endurance to stay out all day. He was already planning a spring turkey hunt with Shane and his 52nd trip to Eagle Lake.

He always carried a camera and loved to show people pictures of family, friends, and his outdoor adventures. Several of us were kind of glad when computers and digital pictures replaced projectors and slide trays.

Harvey was indeed a special person, and he touched each of us in special ways. But, in so many ways, he was teaching us how to accomplish what we might think couldn't be done. No matter what the obstacles we face each day, Harvey's memory and the life he led will guide us and show us... **How To Get Things Done!**

Harvey, you were my mentor and friend....we will all miss you.