

William L. “Bill” Landahl-2009

Bill Landahl served as the first Director of Jackson County Missouri Parks and Recreation for 24 years. When he first arrived at Jackson County, it was a system of small playgrounds plus Lake Jacomo, with a few pastures and woodlands assembled to become a park. One of his first accomplishments was the acquisition of additional land buffering lake and river parkways. A natural opportunist, he was one of the first to take advantage of the newly funded Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. Using a large grant, a comprehensive master plan was developed in 1967, followed by voter approval of \$7 million in bonds for implementation. He was also one of the first to recognize the importance of trails, and spearheaded the development of the Little Blue River bike and hiking trail. Bill took a small growing park system founded in 1922 and made it into one of the largest county park systems in the nation with 22,000 acres. Bill's formal education included a bachelor's degree in Forestry from Michigan State University and an master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Missouri at Kansas City. He continued his education by attending the Texas A&M Recreation Management Institute, Indiana University Executive Development Program, Southwest Park and Recreation Training Institute, and the James Foundation Symposium. Prior to joining Jackson County, Bill began his career in 1949 at Devil's Tower National Park in Wyoming. He also served as Park Superintendent for the Kentucky State Park system in 1955, and was Assistant Director in El Paso, Texas. During his career, Bill received many honors. He was elected as a Fellow by the American Park and Recreation Association, as Fellow member of the American Institute of Park Executives, and received the MPRA Citation of Merit Award. Other awards include the Diamond Award Southwest Park and Recreation Institute, Fellow Award (National Association of County Park & Recreation Officials), MPRA Fellow Award, Public Administrator of the Year (Kansas City Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration), and Public Employee of the Year (Burroughs Audubon Society). Perhaps the pinnacle of Bill's career was the National Recreation and Park Association Bronze Award for the Planning and Development of a Nationally Recognized Park System. The award presentation was in Washington D.C. and attended by President and Mrs. Lyndon Johnson as well as conservationist Laurence Rockefeller. Mr. Landahl passed away in 1988.