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Portraits of the Green Generation

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By Rocky Barker | McClatchy Newspapers

BOISE, Idaho — A cadre of mostly young activists who organized the first Earth Day formed the nexus of an environmental movement that continues to influence society. Meet a few who were present at the creation.

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DENIS HAYES

The Wisconsin native grew up in Camas, Wash., and dropped out of college in 1964 to travel the world. He later graduated from Stanford, where he was president of the student body and an anti-Vietnam War activist. In 1969, Sen. Gaylord Nelson hired him as the national coordinator of Earth Day. President Jimmy Carter later named him director of the Solar Energy Research Institute.

After Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980, Hayes returned to Stanford, finished law school and went into practice. In 1988, Hayes left the law firm and began raising money and organizing a worldwide Earth Day event for 1990. Today he heads Seattle's Bullitt Foundation for environmental sustainability and chairs the Earth Day Network.

SEN. GAYLORD NELSON

Gaylord Nelson served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Army in World War II. He came home to Clear Lake, Wis., where he was elected to the state Senate and then Wisconsin governor. He was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1963.

In September 1969, Nelson proposed a nationwide grassroots demonstration — "a teach-in" — for the environment. He set up a national office in Washington, D.C., and hired Denis Hayes to be national coordinator. After Earth Day's big success, Nelson led efforts in Congress to pass the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act and the other landmark legislation that is the foundation for U.S. environmental protection.

He left the Senate in 1981, continuing his environmental leadership as counselor for The Wilderness Society. He died in 2005 at 89.

MARILYN LAURIE

Marilyn Laurie was an unemployed mother of two when she became one of the five organizers of Earth Day in New York in 1969. When it was over, she took a job as AT&T's first environmental program director. In her roles with AT&T, she convinced AT&T executives to recycle, conserve energy and to become a national leader in environmental management. She rose to vice president of public relations by 1987. Today she's a consultant and still active in the environmental movement.

ARTURO SANDOVAL

Arturo Sandoval was already a Hispanic leader when he joined Hayes to work on Earth Day. After Earth Day, Sandoval continued his civil rights and peace activism. He was drafted, refused induction and was sentenced to three years in prison in the early 1970s. His sentence was suspended for public service work.

After a career in journalism, he began consulting, and set up the Center of Southwest Culture to help indigenous and Latino communities in the Southwest and Mexico become stronger and more sustainable. The center has raised more than \$14 million toward this effort. More recently, he worked with The Wilderness Society to bring Hispanic communities and environmentalists together to protect places they both love.

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RANDAL O'TOOLE

Randal O'Toole was invited to help organize Earth Day as a high school senior in Portland, Ore. It was a defining moment. Instead of becoming an architect, O'Toole decided that he wanted to be a forester. In forestry school at Oregon State University, O'Toole took an economics class and went on to get his graduate degree in economics.

As a member of the Ralph Nader-inspired Oregon State Public Interest Group in the 1980s, O'Toole used economics to help stop the harvest of old-growth timber in national forests. Armed with O'Toole's forest-by-forest analyses, environmentalists showed many timber sales cost the government more than they made. O'Toole's free-market values led him away from other environmentalists: He opposes "smart growth," efforts to fight sprawl with top-down government land-use planning, preferring to empower communities to protect their own values. He is a fellow with the conservative Cato Institute.

RICHARD CIZIK

Richard Cizik was a sophomore at Whitworth College in Spokane, Wash., when he led a campus campaign to save trees the school administration wanted to cut down. In 1973, his senior year, he became a Christian. He joined the staff of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1980 to become a lobbyist for the Moral Majority as it was gaining power in Washington, D.C. He rose to become vice president for governmental affairs and one of the most powerful Christian lobbyists in the Capitol. He stepped down from the association in 2008 and today is forming a new organization to address environmental and global poverty.

SEN. KENT CONRAD

Kent Conrad knew Denis Hayes at Stanford; when Hayes became coordinator of Earth Day, he hired Conrad to help. Conrad became the expert on the ancient addressograph machine, which before computers was used to send mass mailings. After Earth Day he returned to North Dakota; he served as tax commissioner before he was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1986. Today, he chairs the Senate Budget Committee.

BILL MAUK

Bill Mauk grew up in Pocatello, Idaho, and attended the University of Southern California. As student body president, he met Denis Hayes, who was Stanford's student body president. He joined Hayes' idealistic young Washington staff organizing the first Earth Day.

Afterward, Mauk finished graduate school, got a law degree and came to Boise to practice law. He served on the board of the Idaho Conservation League in the mid-1970s, but didn't stay involved in environmental issues. He ran for the U.S. Senate in 1998 as a Democrat and later chaired the Idaho Democratic Party.

TIA NELSON

Sen. Gaylord Nelson's daughter worked 17 years for the Nature Conservancy on climate-change issues. In 2004, she returned to Wisconsin to serve as executive secretary of the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands, managing 78,000 acres of forests and trust funds worth more than \$600 million.

(Barker reports for the Idaho Statesman.)

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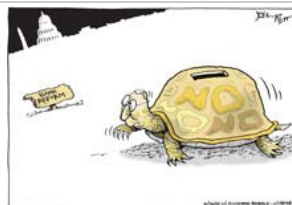
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