

March 2022

To: Madison Board of Parks Commission Naming Committee

From: The Family of Ed Jepsen

Kristin Groth, *Ed's wife*

Andrew and Sarah Jepsen, Ryan and Audrey

Kira (Jepsen) and Jameson Brown, Celine

Re: Proposed naming of the Yahara River Parkway bike/ped path the "Ed Jepsen Way"

We are wholeheartedly in support of renaming the mile-long path along the Yahara River linking Lake Mendota and Lake Monona, "Ed Jepsen Way" in honor of his life and legacy.

Ed and his young family moved to Few Street in the Tenney neighborhood in 1976. He became a leader in the Tenney Lapham Neighborhood Association, TLNA, and loved working with neighbors to transform it into the highly desirable neighborhood it is today. The TLNA knew beautiful parks would enhance the value of the neighborhood and encourage the type of development the neighborhood plan envisioned. Years ago, that fueled Ed's first park initiative when he advocated for the city to transform the breakwater at Tenney Park into a space where people could – and now do – gather to watch the sunset or fish.

Later, Ed was asked to serve on the original committee that outlined the vision for restoring the Yahara River corridor. Immediately after the plan was complete, Ed recruited volunteers to join him and begin the real work – the sweaty, endless work of restoring the historic parkway in the spirit of O.C. Simonds' original landscape plan. No one was more committed to making that plan a reality than Ed. And he never stopped. Decades later, he was still advocating for any initiative which would make the parkway a greater asset for our community.

Over the years, Ed and what became the Friends of the Yahara River Parkway, FYRP, worked their way up and down the river, removing invasive plants and trees, and planting native species. Their work was varied and constant from early spring to late fall.

Ed's two children, now adults with their own families, laugh as they remember Ed's dedication, "We could never take the shortest path to the Tenney beach, or the ice cream shop at Camelot, or the breakwater to watch the sunset. Dad always had to stop and pick a few invasive species, scout out the next project for the FYRP, or water recent plantings."

For about 15 years, Ed tenaciously and good-humoredly nudged city officials to keep the new underpasses at Johnson Street and East Washington Avenue moving forward. Ed thought it was so important for kids and families to be able to walk or bike from Lake Mendota to Lake Monona without crossing dangerously busy streets.

Ed's dedication to the parkway extended well beyond the hours he spent in the park. He went to chainsaw safety training, got certified to apply pesticides safely (and sparingly), cleaned tools, researched native plants and trees, organized prairie burns, attended countless meetings, organized large Earth Day work parties, mapped new plantings and coordinated FYRP plans with Madison parks staff. He also served on the Madison Park's long-range planning committee for years.

It seems everyone who knew Ed praised not only all he accomplished, but how much they enjoyed working with him. He wanted parks – beautiful parks – for everyone to enjoy. He always came prepared. He had strong opinions, but he listened and respected other points of view. He could lighten a tense moment with his quick wit. And he was recklessly kind. Because that's just "The Ed Jepsen Way."