A long long time ago in a progressive galaxy far, far away (Ann Arbor, Michigan), a couple of wise-guy undergraduates decided to parody a relatively new but rapidly growing political movement by writing a musical comedy.

The first song started like this:

“There’s only one day that I love half as much as my birthday.

“That’s Earth Day.”
Fortunately, that’s as far as the musical ever got, but Earth Day is still with us, more than half a century later.

And with climate change in the air, forever chemicals in the water, and landfills filling up beneath terra firma, a day calling for environmental awareness and activism seems more relevant now than ever.

So, with that in mind, 135 volunteers who signed up showed up at Fountain Square Sunday afternoon, for the annual Earth Day downtown cleanup.

Andy Vick, executive director of the Downtown Evanston marketing group (which co-sponsored the cleanup along with the Woman’s Club and Brightview Landscaping), said the event was “an easy opportunity to get people motivated to come out and do their part.”

Volunteers were organized in groups of ten, and sent out on various routes, armed with trash-grabbing claws and garbage bags, to pick up everything from cigarette butts to food wrappers.

Some of the volunteers came on their own.

Others showed up together, like members of Evanston Cub Scout Pack 903.
Pack leader Erik Petersen said having the scouts help out was a way of “connecting with what’s good in the community as well as connecting to the spirit of scouting.”

The scouts agreed, all of them appreciating the opportunity, as one put it, to “help clean the earth.”
Earth Day, which began on April 22, 1970, has actually expanded into Earth Week, or even Earth Month in some places.

There were other Earth Day cleanup events in different Evanston communities on Saturday.

The city’s theme this year is “Planet vs. Plastics,” which might have made a good song title for the ill-fated Earth Day musical lo those many years ago.

As you’ve probably figured out by now, one of the members of less-than-successful Earth Day songwriting duo was yours truly.

So let me now close with a song which, if you tweak the lyrics just a bit, is an all-time classic:

“Happy Earth Day to You.”