



MANITOWISH WATERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

June 2021

Hot Time in the Summertime!

We look forward to summertime fun this year perhaps more than any other summer in our personal histories for the obvious reasons. But, before we launch into our summer, we thought that we would look back at some of what has made Manitowish Waters fun for so many over the years. Enjoy!



Skiing Skeeters Celebrate 60!

By Janelle Kohl

Summertime in Manitowish Waters during the 1960s was a busy place because of the beautiful lakes and the newly formed Skiing Skeeters, our water ski club featured on Rest Lake.

Legally organized in 1961 (initially established in 1954), their original purpose was to promote water sport safety and provide thrilling professional level entertainment for residents and summer tourists. During the 1960s, the club bought and paid for most of the equipment in their use. They bought a Lyon Industries custom-built boat, while also owning one of two 75 horsepower Evinrude motors, the other being loaned by Ray Smeeth Sporting Goods of Ironwood, Michigan.

The Skiing Skeeters earned money through donations, which were gathered by the lovely Skeeterettes, by passing buckets around the audience of each

show. Sponsors also helped financially support the Skeeters.

The original ski shows were held at the Northern Lights Resort property. The owners offered room for Skeeter meetings and for changing clothes/costumes during the show.

The MWHS felt there was much to learn about the beginning of the group and recently interviewed three 1960s ski team members: Jerry Rayala, Beth (Williams) Dahlmeier and Kasey (Christensen) Krans. You can watch the interview [here](#).

As the Skeeters celebrate its 60th anniversary, the dedication and sportsmanship has always made the town proud. As the Skiing Skeeters often say, "All the performers and members serve without pay. Their only compensation is the applause of the audience."

A Word From Our President



Jim Bokern

This summer hopes to be a return to traditional Manitowish Waters Historical Society events and outreach. With the promise of an early spring and effective vaccines, we are expanding our events and projects to further preserve and share our community's history. The MWHS is an affiliated member of the Wisconsin Historical

Society and enjoys the support of a large network of historical societies. Additionally, the MWHS has 501(c)(3) status from the IRS and offers members and supporters the same benefits as other nonprofit groups.

This spring, the MWHS kicked off a large fundraising drive to secure interns for the next three to four years. Over the past few years, the MWHS has employed digital experts on a part-time basis to archive our documents, using PastPerfect archival software. The effort of the MWHS to create a digital archive of a 130+-year backlog of community documents is among our highest priorities. Our new interns will also focus on adding stories, images and narratives to our webpage, allowing everyone free access.

We are also continuing the tradition of gathering important historic information from our long-time residents and sponsor historic gatherings with select Manitowish Waters' residents. These events focus on capturing oral histories from community members to further preserve our heritage. Importantly, our seven newest oral histories immediately migrated to our [YouTube Channel](#), allowing you easy access.

In collaboration with the North Lakeland Discovery

Center, the MWHS continues to offer a series of pontoon tours, trips and events. The MWHS is also going to continue a recognition program of Manitowish Waters' historians. We celebrate these long-time historians by formally recognizing their contributions and legacy annually as "Leaders of Historic Preservation." This event and a presentation on the history of the Statehouse Youth Conservation Corp camp will take place at the North Lakeland Discovery Center on September 9th.

Our MWHS Fun Night has used a team Jeopardy format to allow up to eight people to answer Manitowish Waters' history questions. Attendees had a great time, and our Fun Night will continue as an annual tradition. Many more presentations will be conducted at the Koller Library as well.

Community outreach activities continue to be an exciting tradition for the MWHS. Collaborating with the Chamber of Commerce, the MWHS will close the final chapter on "Historic Mysteries of Manitowish Waters" five-part series, using the popular Chamber After 5 venue. This year, the presentations will review Stone, Fawn, Dog, Dead Pike and Circle Lily lakes' mysteries

Please go to <https://www.mwhistory.org/events/> to discover times and dates for our special events. We look forward to seeing you in 2021!

Highest Regards,



**Please join us for
MWHS FUN NIGHT Featuring**



**June 24, 2021
5 to 7:30 pm
Manitowish Waters Community
Center**

MWHS Board of Directors

Jim Bokern President - jimkb@aol.com
John Hanson Vice President
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Any questions or comments on our newsletter can be directed to Jean Bettenhausen at jmcbett@gmail.com or Frank DiLeonardi at fdileonardi@icloud.com.

Redwood Point: A Family Story

By Tom Joseph

My grandparents, Harry and Gussie Joseph, first came to the Northwoods in 1930. I've always wondered why they drove all the way from Chicago to go fishing, but I'm mighty glad they did. Grampa became a musky hound; Gramma slayed the smallmouth bass with her steel rod. But, more importantly, they fell in love with Manitowish Waters.

In 1933, they bought a peninsula on Rest Lake. Grampa was in the lumber business and had supplied materials for the 1933 Century of Progress Chicago World's Fair. When the exposition ended, he bought the Lumber Trade Association's demonstration house: the All-Wood Exhibit House, Elegant Yet Affordable. The house featured different woods in every room and redwood siding with rounded corners. It was disassembled with every piece numbered, shipped up on the railroad, and reassembled on our property. They built a boathouse, caretaker's house and garage, icehouse, and bath-house, all sided with redwood.



Harry and Gussie in their living room

They named the property Redwood Point.

While Grampa commuted on weekends on the all-night train, Gramma would come up for the summer with my dad and his three siblings. They fished, camped, canoed, berry picked and went on snipe hunts. But the bulk of the summer was spent on the sand beach, swimming to our raft, diving from its high tower, aquaplaning and, eventually, waterskiing.

I've always marveled at my grandparents' vision. The north-facing beach is open to the lake, the boathouse set in a protected bay. There was sufficient property for each of the kids to build a home. On the small arm of our peninsula we call Picnic Point sets a long table (30 feet now, replacing the original shorter one) where the family barbecued out on Saturday nights. Most important, Redwood Point was a family compound. It still is. I spent every summer of my youth up north on the beach with my cousins.

We're now into the fifth generation of Harry and Gussie's descendents: the Ira and Richard Joseph families, the Nadine Joseph Kovar

family, and the Suzanne Joseph Sharken family. The kids still swim to the raft, water ski, catch minnows in butterfly nets, and play tetherball on the beach. When the cousins are up, we cook out at the Picnic Point on Saturdays and someone shouts, "Don't burn the hamburgers." We sit down at the table and invoke our grandparents' words: "May there always be more."

The tradition continues.



Ira Joseph (my dad), brother Richard Joseph and cousin Edgar Katzenberg with muskies



Harry and Gussie, my dad (floppy hat), Suzy Sharken (pigtails) and some of Grampa's customers at Picnic Point



The whole Joseph/Kovar/Sharken brood (minus two Sharkens who hadn't been born yet) at our boathouse

Editor's Note: To watch more about the Joseph family history as told by Tom's aunt Suzanne Sharken, [click here](#). We are continually looking for family stories. Consider sharing your family's story with the MWHS.

Bar Scene: 1960s vs. 1970s

The Broken Knuckle Beer Bar

By Kay Krans



Beer bars catering to kids 18-20 years old are gone from the Wisconsin landscape, but in the 1960s they were a place for young people to socialize. Second only to turning 16 and getting a driver's license was turning 18 and getting your ID card. Many of the beer drinking establishments were in the college towns of Wisconsin, but there were also some located in the rural areas of Wisconsin.

One of the main places for teenagers in Manitowish Waters to meet and socialize was the **Broken Knuckle Beer Bar**. The motto of the bar was: "It's just a joint." What was unique about this bar was that it was divided into two parts. On the entrance side of the building was a soda fountain and sandwich section, and on the other side was the beer bar. It was divided by a half wall with a center entrance to the bar. That made it possible for teenagers under 18 to also hang out at the "**Knuckle**." It was very clean and neat with a red cement floor and an old-fashioned soda fountain. All the tables and counters were bright yellow Formica tops. The bar was all polished wood.

This was a time in Manitowish Waters' history when many families spent the whole summer at their lake places. Mothers would stay with the children at the lake home, and fathers would travel from the cities to spend the weekends with their families. Many of the summer kids and local kids got to know each other through the Skiing Skeeters Water Ski Club and became fast friends. After ski shows and during the evenings, the kids wanted to spend time together, and the Broken Knuckle Beer Bar was in close driving distances to most lake homes. So, if you could drive,

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Theisen's Twin Pines

By DeEtte Theisen

It's 1970 something, you're at least (or almost) 18, it's 10 p.m. on a summer night in Manitowish Waters, so you are heading to the bar at Theisen's Twin Pines. Danny Fox is acting as bouncer at the door, second-generation owner Butch Theisen (no relation) is behind the bar, and you know that everyone around your age who's in town tonight is going to be there 'til bar time at 2 a.m. You can get a tall, cold bottle of Old Style for fifty cents, listen to Marshall Tucker on the juke box, and play the bowling game by the front door for a dime. Foosball draws a crowd in the back, and if you get hungry later on, there are frozen Tombstone pizzas ready to be heated up in the new Amana Radarrange oven by Marlene Theisen in the kitchen.

Guys and girls are all wearing Levi 501 jeans or cords, painter's pants or carpenter jeans. Everyone wears flip flops or maybe, for the girls, Dr. Scholl's sandals. It's crowded and hot inside, but no one seems to mind. There's a bench out front where a sweet, smoky haze always seems to linger. No one seems to mind that either. Soon enough, someone orders a round of shots — kamikazes or Cranberria, in all likelihood.

Everybody seems to have a summer job at one of the local businesses, and parents hand over the keys to the car or boat without too many questions. The black and white tv in the corner of your summer cabin crackling with news of Watergate, the Cold War, and the oil crisis cannot compete with the promises of a laughter-filled '40s era Northwoods bar after the water ski show. Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak may be inventing the Apple computer in a California garage, but by God, you have a foosball tournament to win!



you could all meet for a fun social evening. Most of the kids were between 16-20, but sometimes younger siblings joined in the fun if they were allowed to ride with their older brothers or sisters.

The owners of the establishment were Swede and June Christiansen. Swede and his first wife, Gertie, moved to Manitowish Waters and built their home on Alder Lake. He had a sign at his drive that read **"Anybody Who Don't Like This Life Is Nuts!"** Swede was a retired Milwaukee fireman and "Up North" was a special place for his family. After his wife Gertie died, he married June, and the era of the Broken Knuckle began. Swede handled the bar end of the establishment, and June was the cook and soda fountain attendant. They were both good at what they did and were very good at supervising the kids that came into their establishment. June made the best cheeseburgers and french fries in the Northwoods, and kids looked forward to late evening meals. There was a pinball machine in the bar that was called the "Ace of Spades" where many a competition took place. The juke box played all evening, and fun was had by all until midnight when they closed their doors and sent the kids home.

There was one regular adult patron, an older gentleman, who would often come to the bar in bibbed overalls with a carpenter pencil in his pocket. Someone would always greet him and ask how he

was doing, and the answer would be, "I am just co-pesetic." He would stand at the bar and order his usual, which was a glass of sparkling beer with a raw egg in the bottom. Down the hatch it would go in an instant, and all surrounding him would look at him in awe. He would visit with Swede and a kid or two and soon he was on his way.

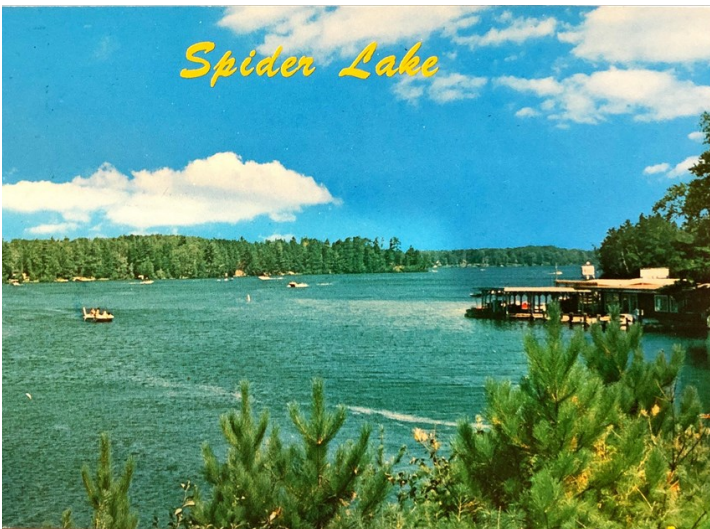
It was a great time to be a teenager in the summer in Manitowish Waters. Adults knew how we were spending our social time, and this great community kept close tabs on all of us.



Gertie and Swede
Christiansen

Then and Now

It can be argued that center stage for summertime fun and activity is on the water, and that has to include our on-water marina. Originally created by the Voss family in the early '60s, the marina moved to the Hibbard family in the mid-'70s before the Fitzgerald's acquired what has been known as Greer's Pier since 1977. The picture to the left shows the marina in the 1960s.



Summer Fun at Koerner's Spider Lake Resort



By JoAnn Miller

Theodore Koerner and his wife purchased Buck's Spider Lake Resort in 1916 and proceeded to develop Koerner's into a premier destination on the shores of both Manitowish and Spider lakes.

The resort operated between May and October. Initially, their advertising focused on the excellent "Muskellunge and Pike" fishing, but Koerner's soon grew into a full-service resort, attracting entire families from across the United States. In addition to the fine-sand beaches for swimming in the clear, refreshing lakes, the resort offered bicycling, canoeing, hiking, motorboating, fishing, a stable of horses, tennis courts, basketball courts, an auditorium, a dining room, ice cream shop, 11 housekeeping cabins and a store where renters could purchase basic food and supplies. A 1941 ad highlighted the availability of an 18-hole golf course "15 minutes by car from resort."

The opening of fishing season was celebrated with a special "Opening Dinner" for resort and other guests. The 1924 "opening" menu featured a Colonial Cocktail, a five-course meal with choices, and included coffee, iced tea or cocoa.

A 1933 newspaper article reports on "a beautiful water trip available to Waltonian disciples at Koerner's Spider Lake Resort" that traveled through Spider, Stone and Rest lakes with the highlight being a guided tour of the fish lock and hatchery.

Throughout the summer, dances were held in the auditorium sponsored by Koerner's and other organizations. A 1917 mid-summer dance featured McNiff's Orchestra of Ironwood. In 1942, "Koerner's Planked Steak Dinner and Western Dude Ranch Party" offered music by Valentie's Cowpunchers. In 1950, guests enjoyed a July 4th "Review and Dance Party." The review included various local talents, including the

MW Kitchen Band. Following the review, there was dancing to the music of Art Elz and his band.

Often, a "Sunday Chicken Dinner with Free Boat Ride" was advertised.

Koerner's auditorium was the site of an annual week-long Minocqua Lakeland Bridge Tournament under the direction of the Wisconsin Bridge Association that drew between 250-300 participants from Detroit, Omaha, Kansas City, New York, St. Paul, Milwaukee, Minocqua and many other midwestern cities.

A later addition to the resort was a lakeside barbecue area built on the shore of Spider Lake. It offered outdoor dining on tables and chairs under an L-shaped structure built with stone masonry and logs above a concrete floor. Complete with fireplace, oven, two barbecue pits and a bar, it was thought to be unique in Wisconsin.

The large auditorium and excellent facilities attracted many conventions and large meetings to hold events at Koerner's. Just a few examples included The Upper Peninsula Medical Society, the Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce, the Wisconsin Hotel Association, the Wisconsin-Michigan Fruit Growers Association, the Wisconsin District Attorneys and The Chauffeurs Club of Manitowish.

At least twice in the early 1950s Koerner's hosted Miss Wisconsin and her court, featuring programs at the auditorium and shore lunches with area guides.

Additional summertime activities included movies in the auditorium and memorable times in the cocktail lounge overlooking Manitowish Lake.

Ted Koerner passed away in 1946, but his wife and their son Alvin continued to provide summer memories until 1954 when the resort was sold. Without the passion of the Koerner's, the resort just seemed to fade away.



Of Queens and Corn, Fun at Voss'



By Ruth Gardner

A swamp fiddle, a gut-bucket, a washboard and three lovely ladies known as **The Rhythm Queens** were all you needed for an unforgettable night of fun at Voss' Bar in the 1960s. The group consisted of **Anna Mae LaPorte**, playing the violin, **Geraldine Andrews** on piano, and her sister, **Phyllis Andrews** on the drums. Geraldine would wrap her fingertips with Band-Aids because she knew it would be "A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight!" Thanks to **Laurence Graf**, of Graf's Soda Company, there were aluminum cans filled with un-popped popcorn for everyone to shake, rattle and roll in time with the music!

Sometimes **Wally Pollus** would join the reverie, playing his guitar and singing songs like, "Seven Beers with the Wrong Woman" and "Barnacle Bill the Sailor." Wally was an imposing figure, tall and hunch-backed, and always wearing a Stetson hat. When he tired of playing, he would "ride" his guitar around the dance floor, hat outstretched, hoping for a dollar or two.

At intermission, the bar and dance floor were lined wall-to-wall with people waiting for the special treat of corn fresh from the fields and roasted over a hot charcoal fire. The corn was wrapped in layers of newspaper, soaked overnight in barrels of salt-water, and placed over an old bed spring filled with smoldering charcoal to be slow roasted to perfection! Trays would be heaped with corn and brought into the bar. The stampede was on! Grab your ear of

corn, strip it and dip it into the cans of melted butter and salt. A treat fit for a king!

The Grand Finale! Uncle **Lloyd LaPorte** would step to the front, wearing his work-worn jeans and red suspenders. He would place the violin on his hip, tap his old leather boots and play a lively rendition of "Turkey in the Straw."

...And a Good Night to All!



MW Historical Society 2021 Calendar

For more information
go to: [https://
www.mwhistory.org/events/](https://www.mwhistory.org/events/)

<p>JUNE</p> <p>MW Hike and Pub Crawl 6/9, 3 to 7 pm Start at Koller Park</p> <p>Exploring Rest Lake Pontoon Tour 6/11, 9 to 11 am, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm or 2 to 4 pm Discovery Center</p> <p>Dillinger Pontoon Tour Including Lunch at noon 6/12, 9:30 am to noon or 1:15 to 3:45 pm Little Bohemia Lodge</p> <p>Jeopardy Fun Night 6/24, 5 to 7:30 pm MW Community Center</p> <p>Southgate Canal Presentation 6/26, 9:30 to 11 am MW Community Center</p> <p>Alder and Wild Rice Lakes Mysteries Pontoon Tour 6/29, 9 to 11 am, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm or 2 to 4 pm Discovery Center</p>	<p>JUNE</p> <p>Manitowish River Canoe/Kayak 6/30, 10 am to 2:30 pm Discovery Center</p> <p>JULY</p> <p>Fourth of July Parade</p> <p>Historic Cemetery Walk 7/5, 5 to 7 pm Pine Lawn Cemetery</p> <p>Mysteries of Stone, Fawn and Clear Lakes Pontoon 7/7, 9 to 11 am, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm or 2 to 4 pm Clear Lake Boat Landing</p> <p>Dillinger Pontoon Tour Including Lunch at noon 7/9, 9:30 am to noon or 1:15 to 3:45 pm Little Bohemia Lodge</p> <p>Railroads and Commerce Talk 7/10, 9:30 to 11 am Koller Library</p>	<p>JULY</p> <p>Legends of Manitou Pontoon Tour 7/15, 7:30 to 9:30 pm Blue Bayou</p> <p>Turtle Flambeau Flowage Pontoon 7/20, 10:30 am to 3:30 pm or 5 to 8:30 pm (sunset cruise) Discovery Center</p> <p>Spider and Island Lakes Pontoon 7/23, 9 to 11 am or 11:30 am to 1:30 pm or 2 to 4 pm Discovery Center</p> <p>Exploring CCC and Camp Mercer 7/31, 9:30 to 11 am Koller Library</p> <p>AUGUST</p> <p>Big Lake Investigation Pontoon 8/19, 9 am to 1:30 pm Discovery Center</p> <p>Dillinger Pontoon Tour Including Lunch at noon 8/25, 9:30 am to noon 1:15 to 3:45 pm Little Bohemia Lodge</p>	<p>SEPTEMBER</p> <p>Historic Preservation Leader Event 9/9, 5 to 7 pm Discovery Center</p> <p>Statehouse YCC Driving Tour 9/11, 1 to 4:30 pm Discovery Center</p> <p>OCTOBER</p> <p>Amazing Forestry Legacy Driving Tour and Short Hikes 10/1, 9 am to 4 pm Discovery Center</p> <p>Partridge Creek and Lake Hike 10/9, 9 am to 4 pm Discovery Center</p> <p>Chamber After 5 10/20, 5 to 6:30 pm Ye Olde Shillelagh</p> <p>NOVEMBER</p> <p>Plum Lake Hike 11/6, 10:30 to 5 pm Discovery Center</p>
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Don't Forget to RENEW your 2021 dues! Membership & Donations

Those interested in joining the MWHS should complete the form below and send in your form with \$20 to:

Manitowish Waters Historical Society
P.O. Box 100
Manitowish Waters WI 54545

Those considering joining the Manitowish Waters Historical Society are encouraged to explore our web page, attend MWHS events and reach out to board members.

Student Memberships are available for \$2, renewing each May.

Donations

Donations can be sent to:
Manitowish Waters Historical Society
P.O. Box 100
Manitowish Waters WI 54545

MW Historical Society is an approved 501c3 charitable organization, and contributions may be tax deductible. Please contact us for additional information.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

**Thank you for supporting the Manitowish Waters Historical Society.
Memberships renew each January.**