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Memories of Lake Alice

By Jim Wunsch

I am originally a Marshfield man. Born in nearby Rozellville in 1938, my family moved to town when I was four. We started taking a vacation shortly after, and I will always remember loading up the 1930 Chevrolet and taking the 3.5 hour trip to Tomahawk and Pine Creek Resort on Lake Alice. This resort was on the eastern most end of the lake on what was then, old highway "D". My dad and uncles seined minnows from a small creek near Marshfield, and we transported them in an old milk can, which was mounted on the front bumper of the car. Sometimes when we went through Tomahawk, we would stop by the old Tourist Information Hut on main street and look at pictures of fish and get an ice cream cone.

Arriving at Pine Creek Resort was always exciting. The old cabins were indeed rustic with an icebox rather than a refrigerator. Ice harvested from Lake Alice in the winter was stored deep under sawdust in the icehouse, and it was from there that we retrieved the blocks as needed. We also stored the fish we caught in the icehouse, wrapping them in waxed paper and burying them deep in the sawdust and marking the spot with a stick.

And did we catch fish? The fishing was always great. The first year we were there a guy caught a northern that was so big they took a picture of it next to me, and it was longer than I was. We generally fished fairly close to the resort because outboard motors were pretty rare. The stumps across the lake were eight feet high back in those days and loaded with crappies and blue gills. There was no such thing as a spinning rod back then. You caught the majority of your fish on worms and minnows. The minnows we transported from Marshfield kept nicely all week in a screened live box in the lake, and the worms and night crawlers were kept in an apple crate covered with ferns and parked under the cabin where the icebox vent dripped cool water. Fishing was still always best in the morning or evening. Of course, when the kids were bedded down after dark, mom and dad could walk over to the bar and socialize with other adults.

Twenty years passed. I am then married with four young daughters and living in Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin. We know the people who ran Al's Point Resort on Lake Alice. They are from Marshfield as well. We decide to vacation at one of their cabins in 1966. My parents and other siblings in my family joined us in the years that followed. And in 1968 my father Elmer found out Hal DeRoche was selling lake frontage from his Pine Creek Resort property. He was quick to buy the first lot from Hal (110 feet, \$2,500), and in 1969 my brothers and I helped him build a cabin on that property, which I own today. The cabin has undergone quite a transformation during the last 40 years: a garage, a boat shed, a pontoon shed, an adjoining back lot to burn brush and park vehicles, and some internal improvements as well. In late September of 1983 when the lake was drawn down 5.5 feet to repair Kings Dam, we built a fish crib just out from our pier. That crib is still there today and still a popular fishing spot on the lake.



**Building a fish crib during the draw down
on Lake Alice -- September 1983.**

The lake has changed too. In the mid 1990's, the 485 acre property directly across from our cabin, which was a tree farm owned by Ed Stiegerwald, was finally developed and 20 or more properties were sold with cabins quickly following. Virgin shoreline gone forever. Surely the fishing is not what it was. While it was very common to go out and catch 50 crappies or bluegills in the 1970's and 80's, it is a struggle now to catch a half dozen. Bass fishing with a surface bait was something I always enjoyed, but I don't even try anymore. It was hard to find an ice shanty on our end of the lake in those early years. Now it's like a city out there in some places. I surely wonder how the lake can be expected to produce enough fish for that kind of pressure. On the bright side, the northern fishing is still good, and there certainly are more walleye in the lake than there were years ago.

There was such a concern over the years with the development of larger boats and PWC's, but it seems to me to be offset by the pontoon boats. People are finding that a great way to enjoy the lake is from the comfortable seat of a quiet, slow-moving pontoon. There is no better way to enjoy a summer day in northern Wisconsin than to cruise around on a pontoon boat. And if you find yourself doing just that, and you happen to see my pontoon ("Rosebud") go by, wave and say hi. I'm the guy in the tan hat.

Jim Wunsch
Lake Alice Property Owner