



Lake Country Legends

February 2006

LAKE COUNTRY SCENIC BYWAY NEWSLETTER
www.lakecountryscenicbyway.com



Winter Fishing Along the Byway-By Archie & Helen Henderson-Byway Ambassadors

When airborne over the eighty-eight miles of the Lake Country Scenic Byway in January and February you look down and see some of the lakes with circles or a maze inscribed on the ice. These formations are not caused by Mother Nature, visits from creatures of outer space, or schemes of advertising. They are the mark of a group of fervent winter fishermen who fished for a prize, fun and relaxation, namely a fishing derby.

Four of these events come to our minds that are held annually within sight of the byway. January 14th, 2006, on Big Toad Lake, the Veterans of Foreign Wars #8165 (Wolf Lake) scheduled their 43rd annual derby. This draws a gathering of a thousand or more fishermen with their families from the local area, Detroit Lakes, Frazee, and the Fargo area. Prizes (cash/merchandise), food and entertainment are at the site (may be held inside due to unsafe ice conditions).

East down the Byway on February 26, 2006, the Dorothy Noeske Memorial Fishing Derby will be held on Straight Lake at Osage. The Osage Sportsmen's Club sponsors this derby. This is a panfish contest designed to offer kids prizes as well as adults. Again, may we mention, this is a family outing, enjoyed the last Sunday in February for the last 40 years. If anyone could inherit the style of Dorothy Noeske's success of catching panfish, you would be an annual winner, as Dorothy most always was.

Moving on the Byway east to Park Rapids, the 8th Annual American Legion Community Fishing Contest will be held on February 4, 2006, on Fish Hook Lake. This event spans the weekend. Activities include a steak fry, dance, Otto's Frosty Frozen 5K run, medallion hunt, fishing contest, and pancake breakfast. There's something for all the family. Prizes are big, like \$110,000 worth. Last year it was

such a nice day that people were fishing in shirt sleeves.

At the eastern end of the Byway there is Walker Bay on Leech Lake. The 27th Annual Eelpout Festival will be held February 10-12, 2006. Attractions other than fishing are numerous, like maybe a tour of a high-rise fish house, a beaver lodge fish house, and a real Polar Plunge held at high noon the 11th. Fishing hours go all night long and the Eelpout are not too elusive. This is one day the walleye and northern pike are in the limelight.

We like to emphasize that these events are everlasting over the years. 43rd Annual Derby for Wolf Lake, 40 years of pan fishing at Osage Sportsmen's Derby, 8th Annual American Legion Community Derby (we're guessing probably 10 more years under Park Rapids Chamber of Commerce sponsorship), and 27th Annual International Eelpout Festival at Walker. These events are a part of our winter festivities and all are family oriented. Seventy-five percent of the paybacks go to the participants and the balance to the sponsors that stay right here in the communities. These funds are used for conservation of wildlife, human health education, human welfare programs, and youth activities. These circles on the ice of our lakes are evidence of families enjoying winter fishing activities upon them.

Now we want to extend to you a true winter fishing story that we were a part of. The story originates at the north end of the segment of the Byway (Highway 71 north from Park Rapids to Itasca Park). It was the Christmas season of 1955. I was home on leave from the United State's Air Force. My brother and I wanted to do some winter fishing. We chose Elk Lake in Itasca State Park as our destination. As a child, when our family would visit Itasca Park, we would always stop at Elk Lake and wonder why it wasn't considered the source of the

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“Mighty Mississippi”, as a stream runs from Elk Lake into Lake Itasca. My father would say “maybe Henry (Schoolcraft) got tired of paddling any farther,” was the reason.

The snow was deep so we placed our fish house close to the stream outlet and road. We were warm and comfortable but had no interested fish confront our decoy. It was late afternoon and getting dark. We could hardly see the bottom in 12 feet of water. Using a red and white decoy seemed to illuminate the water. Suddenly my brother said, “see that log under the decoy, that is a big one.” The spear was in my hands so I let it drive deep in the water. The fish was on the spear as the spear and rope drifted out under the ice. We pulled the rope, spear and fish up and quickly closed the spearing door as the fish cleared it. The large fish shook off the spear and tipped over

the small stove in the fishing house. Have any of you readers tried holding down a huge Northern Pike in a 4x5 area with two adults and a burning stove? Well, we got the fish out on the ice and the stove turned off. We folded up the fish house and pulled it to the shore. We weighed in our trophy at Fuller’s Tackle Shop in Park Rapids. It weighed 23 lbs. 14 oz., and was the biggest fish speared so far that winter. The record didn’t last long, as Pat Dennis and Cyril Bethel both speared fish over 25 lbs. that year.

This isn’t the end of the story. I was headed to San Antonio, Texas, on December 28th for Officer Candidate School. I took the big frozen fish to my uncle in Omaha, Nebraska. He placed it in his attic to keep it frozen. He owned a couple of mobile home courts around Arksarben Park in Omaha. The tail

of the fish had been burned on the fish house stove and the fins were broken from freezing so it could not be mounted, but he wanted to show his clientele. He placed it in the trunk of his car and took it daily to his office at the court. Many people viewed it and he told me later one remark was, “Mista Herman, where did ya catch that monster.” As the word got around Carter Lake (a backwater of the Missouri River) on the north side of Omaha was fished heavily.

See how easily fishermen respond. But then there are the fishermen who come here from other states with a \$20 bill, a new pair of overalls and find fishing so good they don’t have time to change either one.

That’s our 88 miles of Lake Country Scenic Byway. Enjoy it.
By Ambassadors,
Archie and Helen Henderson

Become a Member of the Byway Today

Benefits include:

- Stakeholder in sustainability of the Lake Country Scenic Byway
- Newsletter Subscription
- Input in Key Byway and Highway issues.
- E-mail announcements
- Opportunity to attend Association Meetings, if desired
- Input in Key Byway and Highway issues.

Byway Membership Levels

- 88 Mile Benefactor.....\$88
- Scenic Sponsor.....\$25
- Friends.....\$10
- Ambassador.....\$5

Mail to:

Lake Country Scenic Byway Assn
PO Box 249, Park Rapids, MN 56470

Organization _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Fax _____

E-mail _____