

Chicog News for July, 2024
JoAnn Malek

Are you surprised to learn that the sport of water skiing began right here, on the calm waters of midwest lakes? Ralph Samuelson decided that if we can ski on snow we can ski on water. So he did. He built skis from pine planks, eight feet long and nine inches wide. In 1922, on the waters of Lake Pepin, he became the first known person to water ski.

Tommy Bartlett water skied just once, on his seventieth birthday. Long before that, in 1952, he founded the Tommy Bartlett Water Ski and Jumping Boat Thrill Show. Wisconsin became known as the "Show Ski Capitol of the World."

In August of 1960 the Min-AquaBats, the oldest water ski show club in the nation, hosted the first ever Wisconsin State Water Ski Championships. There were three events, slalom, trick, and jump skiing. That weekend bylaws were formulated for the Wisconsin Water Ski Foundation, with goals of promoting water skiing, water safety and good sportsmanship.

In the early seventies, Guy and Flossie Turley moved to a Chicog lake from Griffith, Indiana. Newly retired, they came to assist daughter Sandy and husband Homer with their resort on Rice Lake in Minong. They brought along *Ole Red*, a Boston Whaler with a seventy-five horsepower Johnson motor. As time went on Grandpa Turley patiently taught many beginners the skill of water skiing. A large chest freezer on the Turley screen porch held tubs of ice cream. New skiers were invited to choose their reward, a cone filled with the flavor of their choice.

"It takes a lot of falls to progress in the sport..." stated Karley Koehler, a competitive skier who began water skiing when she was two. *Midwest patience, kindness and encouragement permeate the sport and make the falls less disappointing.*

This patience is required of the boat driver as well as the hopeful skier. Don Turley continued in his dad's role. Many neighbors remember learning to water ski under Don's tutelage. School teachers in California, the family spent summer months in Chicog. Don taught shop, was an expert in various technical skills, and loved to putter in his garage. He designed a slalom ski course using milk cartons painted yellow and skiers from around the lake honed slalom skills. Successful skiers often came away with paint chips on arms or legs.

Eventually the racers purchased an official slalom set which measured 850x75 feet and had six turn balls. Lake rules required that the course could not be left in the water, so every morning the slalom course was carefully put in place and

every afternoon it was taken down. Almost two hours! Occasionally paying a fine seemed the better option.



Photo by Bill D'Andrea



Photos by JoAnn Malek

Today's slalom skiing, behind a boat with a 325 horse motor, is beautiful to watch. Skiers hold the handle of the rope with one hand and stretch across the water, almost lying flat as they pass around each turn ball, creating tall rooster-tails of spray. Don occasionally entered waterski tournaments. "I won" he announced to his family once. "I was the only one entered in my age group! He'd be proud to watch my young granddaughters making expert slalom turns and winning state and U.S. regional competitions.

Some lake folks were unhappy with the disruptions that water skiing caused. In 1974, Clem Stutzman brought the concerns to the town board. This is when lake no-wake rules were adopted.



Photo by Bill D'Andrea

Don designed and built a double-decked pontoon that his grandchildren dubbed *Old Faithful*. Folks of all ages loved jumping and splashing from high above the water. This distinctive watercraft, with a bald eagle painted on one side of the screen porch and American flag flying, was lead boat in the fourth of July boat parades initiated by Ed Brenner and Don in 1979. Generous and cordial, Don invited lake residents back to his home for annual pot luck picnics. Juice, sodas and a keg were the rewards rather than ice cream cones from the old chest freezer on the porch.

ONGOING thanks to Katy Larson and her colleagues at the Spooner Public Library. They do research on the topics of my Chicog columns and have found interesting pieces of Wisconsin history for me to include.

IF YOU have spent many years in Chicog township I'd love to chat with you.
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NOTE: Summer Walkabouts have been cancelled. Weekly gatherings will resume in December, 2024.

IMPORTANT JULY DATES

Wednesday 7/10, 6pm, monthly Chicog meeting

Wednesdays 7/10&24 Namekagon Transit service

Wednesday, 7/24, 10:30-12, Books&Bread, Beaverbrook

Tuesday, 7/23, 11-1, Bibliodragon, town hall

Town Website: www.townofchicog.com