

A Quick History of Minnesociates Associating with friends in Minnesota

by Cynthia McCray

Fifty years ago in the summer of 1963, Barton and Dorothy Hunter of Indianapolis, Indiana found on the shores of Hand Lake the very thing they had been seeking: a fishing camp for sale where they could bring their four sons on vacation. Vi and Oscar Johnson were ready to retire and move on. And wow, the price was right!

The Hunters and a few of their Indianapolis friends gathered to look at the four cabins and their lovely surroundings. Yes, we would like to purchase it! And so Minnesociates was born.

Soon decisions had to be made – including which family would get which cabin. Dorothy Hunter and Winnie Smith put their heads together to come up with a plan. They showed great wisdom by suggesting that the cabin to be shared by the Miller family of Des Moines, Iowa (with 6 children under 15 years of age) and the McCrae family of Indianapolis (with 5 children under 11) would be the yellow cabin to the south, preserving hopefully a bit quieter atmosphere for the other cabins to the north.

Despite their hopes, it was not always quiet. One summer Minnesociates got a complaint about our noise pollution. It was true that some of our members would dash down the dock and cannonball into the water, all the time shrieking at the top of their lungs. We were guilty as charged. As an effort at

reconciliation with our neighbors, we wrote an apology and resolved to be more considerate.

Leo and Louise Waters from Estherville, Iowa sometimes provided a lot of fun for Minnesociates with their evenings of square dancing. Some of you will recall the delightful little pavilion that Leo built on the shore of their property, appropriately named . . . of course . . . Dancing Waters. Leo was an excellent square dance caller. Louise always baked a cake and served us refreshments. What fun we had!

The Hand Lake property was shared in a kind of informal partnership arrangement among the five families. Early on we called on the services of a lawyer to shape up our shaky ownership details into a legal document. After examining the situation, the poor man slapped his forehead and said, “This is the strangest property case I have ever seen. It will never last!” He was wrong. Here we are 50 years later, changed in many ways, but the community arrangement still works for us.

Our children (and others, too, I’m sure) have never forgotten the generosity of Gloria Taylor when she took them waterskiing on Hand Lake. This was a rare and very exciting opportunity for kids whose boating consisted of canoes and row boats!

In our retirement, there were many summers when my husband Ian and I spent part or all of the season at Hand Lake. We would enjoy the chilly June days through the warmth of August.

Over the course of time, each of the original Minnesociates families gave their cabin to one of their children, or sold to another family's children. Dale and Betty Miller, one of the original couples, do not travel up anymore. Every other founding member of Minnesociates has passed away except for me.

Now Fred Smith and Mary Martin are the glue that holds Minnesociates together, staying most of the summer while the rest of us come and go. In 2013, I got to be at Hand Lake for the entire month of July as family members came and traveled to and from their homes in Colorado, Vermont, Michigan and Indiana.

For our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, Hand Lake is their favorite place in the world to be!

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