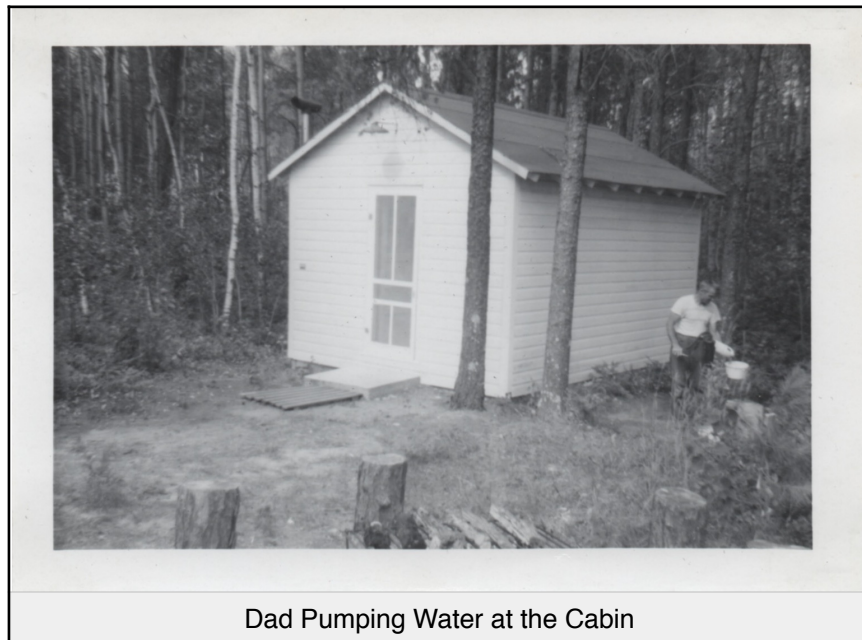


## Chapter 15

### Island Lake

The cabin at Island Lake is the place we almost consider as our third home. Soon after Susie was born in 1967, Grandma and Grandpa Hauger died and Mom and Dad inherited \$5000. They traveled north from Freeport to the Townsend Resort where we had had good fishing for several years, renting a cabin at the resort. They learned that the ice house on a boy's camp on the east side of the lake was for sale as the camp was closing. With the \$5000 they bought the ice house and the eight acres on which it sat. Although it was unfinished on the inside, the previous owner had installed bunk beds and some appliances. It had electricity and a sand point, hand pump.

Island Lake is eleven miles north of Spooner, WI, and eight miles northwest of Trego. Unfortunately, it takes about seven hours to drive up from Racine and about the same time for my brother Douglas to drive from Freeport. But it has become such a tradition for both families and for our parents before us to spend several weeks each summer at the cabin. In the early 1990s Mom and Dad turned the cabin over to Doug and me. We shared equally in the expenses associated with the property. However, around 2010, Doug told us that his girls were not really too interested in the cabin and he knew that Steve and Susie were. So he suggested that we buy his half of the property, and we did. He had already bought out our interest in Dad's final farm after he died. The two buyouts were exactly the same amount of money. However, Doug indicated that he and his family would like to continue coming, and we are pleased that they still





Joyce and Steve Moving into the Cabin

love the place. Doug has been a tremendous help, re-roofing the cabin with us in 2016 and helping remove unwanted trees in 2017.

In May, 1980, while we were finishing up our duties at the Institute, I got a call from Doug. He told us that there had been a tremendous forest fire northwest of Spooner which had destroyed our cabin and forest. He said that he and Dad were returning to our property the following week and asked me to come along and help rebuild the cabin. I lamely excused us saying that my obligations to the Institute required that we stay until June. Dad, Mom, Doug, and Audrey did return to the ashes of the cabin and rebuilt it far better than it had been. The total cost for building materials came to \$5600. Insurance covered \$5000 and we covered the rest.

After the fire the devastation was so great that we failed to go up for several years. Doug and Dad continued to go and, in fact, planted thousands of seeding white

pinus. These trees, along with the natural reforestation of poplar and birch are now mature and give no evidence of the fire.

However on one occasion Dad and I were out cutting down the fire-damaged trunks of trees. I was running the chain saw and Dad was pushing the trees. As the tree was falling, something slipped and I nicked my leg with the chain saw. I tied a bandana around my leg to stop the bleeding and we continued cutting.

When we returned to the cabin, Joyce asked what happened. I explained what happened and rolled up my pant leg to show her the cut. By this time, little white ligaments were showing in the wound. I can stand blood, but the sight of the white tendons showing was too much. I sort of fainted, and Joyce rushed



The New Cabin After the Fire

me in to the Spooner Hospital to sew up the wound. So much for brave Morrie!

Fishing at Island Lake is good. We catch bluegills, crappie, large mouth bass, northern pike, and, in the early days, bullheads. In the mid 1990s, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) made a deal with the lake owners. Up till then, the lake was private with access only for those living on the lake. The DNR wanted to install a public ramp so that everyone could have access. In return, they said that they would poison the lake and introduce walleyed pike. This sounded like a good deal! The only problem was that they killed off the bullheads, and the walleyed pike did not thrive and died out. Also, the fishing has not been quite as good since.

There are exceptions. In 2016 Susie's brother-in-law, Andy, took Lance and his son out and caught a dozen big bass weighing over thirty pounds in a little over an hour. So they are there!

To prove the point I next show my catch of a nice bass and some sunfish. In the early days we even had a "live box" to hold fish till we had enough to clean. When Dad and Steve built the new pier, the live box disappeared. Now we clean every string of fish that comes in.

The first few years Dad rented a wooden fishing boat from the Townsend Resort. Then he bought a nice aluminum boat that has served us ever since, with the Johnson two horse outboard that gets us around the lake. Doug and I also keep our canoes at the lake and use them both on the lake and the rivers in the area.

After learning to sail at Lake Mendota in Madison, I bought a nice 13' Canadian sailboat. We sailed it some in Lake Michigan, but then brought it north to Island Lake. The nice thing is that we could launch it right from our shore line. At the time there was no public launch. It was an ideal sized boat for the lake.

Sadly, we sold this boat when we bought the 26" Thunderbird sailboat. Since it had a deep five foot keel, a huge trailer, and had to be launched by crane, it was strictly a Lake Michigan boat. However, during the 1990s we donated



The New Cabin Looking South



Steve and I Canoeing on Island Lake



Andy and Ronnie Match with Bass

the Thunderbird to the Sea Scouts and bought a 19' Chrysler Buccaneer, "Bucky Bee", since it is yellow and black.

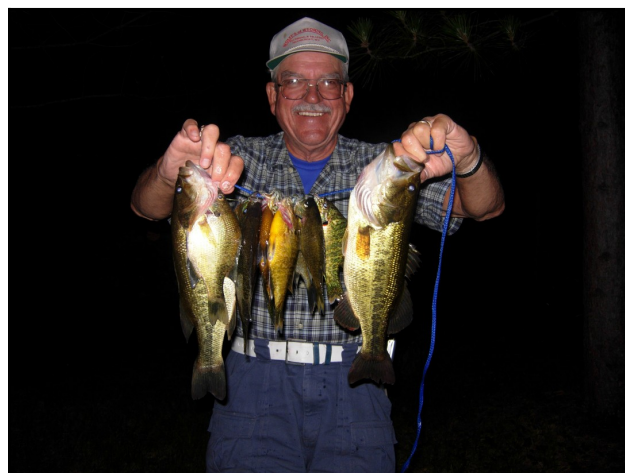
Bucky Bee is a little small for Lake Michigan although we did take it out several times. Interestingly, the Kenosha Yacht Club has several Buccaneers that they use for instruction. However, Bucky Bee is perfect for Island Lake. This has been its home ever since we trailered it up to the cabin. After sailing season we park it on the trailer in the woods, wrapped in at least three tarps. Fortunately no limbs have fallen yet to damage the tarps or boat. To launch it we use the new DNR boat launch at the south end of the lake. The problem always is to have a vehicle with a ball for the trailer hitch.

Before we bought one, we rented a wind surfer from Harriet's Store on the corner of County E and Island Lake

Road. We weren't very good, but wind surfing sure was fun. So, as a high school student, Steve bought a HiFly wind surfer which we still use at the cabin. Many years later we rented a 39' sailboat from the Moorings in Tortola, BVI, and a HiFly, lashed to the deck, was part of the package. I actually wind surfed the Caribbean on it.

It may be that the family contains a sailing gene. A few years ago Steve's son Ray, who learned to wind surf on Steve's wind surfer, bought himself a wind surfer. Now one of the great pleasures on the lake is to have both wind surfers and the Bucky Bee out on the lake at the same time, racing each other. The Bucky Bee usually has the advantage due to its greater length. But many times the three sails are the only ones on the lake - we have our own fleet!

Actually, we do. Susie talked us into buying two single kayaks recently. So now we have two canoes, two kayaks,



Me With Nice Bass

two wind surfers, a row boat, and a sailboat at our dock. Each 4th of July we use the end of the pier as a launch pad for fireworks. Since we don't want the boats to be damaged by any fireworks accidents we must move them up or down the lakeshore, out of range of the fireworks.

The fireworks show has become a competitive event around the lake. There are usually four or five groups around the lake, each trying to top the last display. Since Steve is a licensed fireworks shooter, and he and his boys usually spend several hundred dollars on fireworks, we usually do pretty well.

In earlier days Dad would love to watch the lake, sitting on a crude bench made of two stumps and a board. In time the bench decayed, and I decided to make a real



Our First Sailboat on Island Lake

bench of composite wood on a large composite wood platform. I ordered the bench from a company in Iowa, and it got delivered to our neighbors to the north. With Joyce's help we moved the platform to the lakeshore and built the bench on it. It is the social center of the camp, and we get pictures of our grandchildren on the bench each year. It offers a glorious view of the lake and magnificent sunsets. The next page shows some of these.



Half of the Fleet

Another of the joys of Island Lake is the nearby Pair-O-Lakes restaurant. On Friday nights our favorite waitress, Cheri Luell, is on duty and enjoys serving us. She is also the township treasurer and sends us our tax bills. She also works at the local Spooner appliance company. So we have frequent interactions with her. Here she's wearing the hat grandson Max gave her as she waits



Three Sails Racing

on us. We go to the Pair-O-Lakes restaurant every Friday night we are up there.

The sailer hats are an interesting tradition. On about my 75th birthday, Susie brought up enough hats that everyone had one for my birthday party at Island Lake. It was a jolly good party in the sun room of the cabin. Steve and his family made it just in time for the party. He had driven through a terrible storm and had to drive around several fallen oak trees on the way to the cabin.

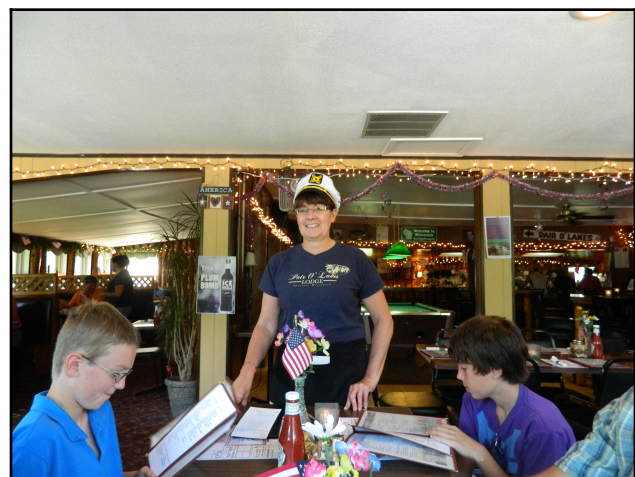
That was the year of a terrible heat wave that preceded the storm. It

had been 95° in Racine as we left, 100° in Eau Claire as we drove through, and 105° on the bank thermometer in Spooner as we arrived. I immediately called the appliance store where Cheri worked and asked if they had any air conditioners left. They had two, and I said, "Put one on the shelf for us, and I'll be right down to get it." That worked, and we soon had air conditioning which saved the day. However, since then we have had such cool weather that we have never used the window air conditioner.

One of the most fun games we played at Island Lake was "Herky Jerky". We had a great, inflatable water toy on which all four grandchildren could ride and cavort. The kids would dance on the edge of the toy, and Steve or I would slowly drag the toy back and fourth and then suddenly give it a strong tug, spilling off the kids amid cheers and laughter all around. It was a game we played for years - until the floating toy sprung a leak and was discarded. Very sad!

As the photos illustrate, the honorary bench is the center of our social life at the cabin. The inscription on the bench reads, "In Appreciation to Florence M. & Morris J. Firebaugh". As the following pictures show, it is the main spot we entertain our guests. And we have had many guests through the years.

My parents set the tone in the early years of the cabin. They had the Besserts, Audrey's folks, the Bittners, our farm neighbors, Charles and Vera and many other folks as guests. Douglas and Audrey have entertained Robert and Ruth Ann Johansen at the cabin for many



Cheri Luell at Pair O Lakes

years.

We have had Dave and Carol Pucely, Jack and Jane Frost, Mike and Lily Lo, Nancy Hennessy, Sandy Christensen, and Mitch and Jean Leavitt as our guests. Our sleeping capacity has expanded from six maximum in the cabin alone to four or six more with the addition of the pop up trailer. The trailer also provides us with hot water and gas for cooking. It allows both of our children's families to join us for the 4th and 5th of July celebrations. The 5th, incidentally, is my birthday.



Playing the Dunking Game

One of the greatest joys of life at the cabin is cooking around the campfire. Doug's son-in-law, Carl, cooks whole meals on the campfire, but my main contribution is breakfast. I usually cook a pound of bacon, followed by one large pancake for each person. My "secret recipe" starts with plain pancake mix, then my blend of pecans, craisins and shredded coconut. It is usually a great hit, but some like their pancakes plain. I sometimes cook the evening meal of steak and potatoes. I find it easier to cook over an open fire that on the electric stove.

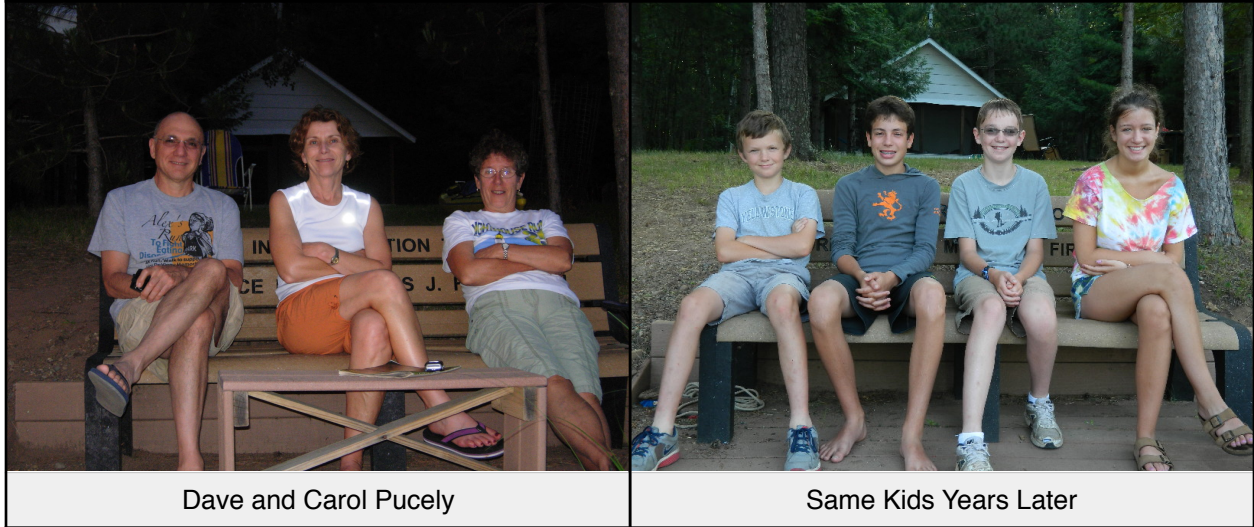
Of course, the work of cabin maintenance is never done. The first major task was rebuilding the cabin after the fire in 1980. Then, in 1993, our friend Nancy suggested that it would be nice to be able to sit outside the main cabin and eat and watch the lake and the sunset. Joyce and I dug in the footing, and Dad, Mom, Doug, and Audrey came up and helped construct the sunroom. It was quite an undertaking. I had to get a building permit for the 8' X 16' addition that was 75' back from the waterline. I barely



Max, Lance, Ray and Maddie



Three Women in Our Family



Dave and Carol Pucely

Same Kids Years Later

snuck it in - the water level in the lake was low that year, so the waterline just made the 75' limit.

Next came the "bathroom" addition. We tore out the rear two cabin windows, sank a sand point pump, and added an Incinolet electric toilet and two closets for our tools and supplies. In 2016 Doug and I added a metal roof, and in 2017 we took down ten trees that threatened the cabin. Work never ceases!



Campfire Scene



Cooking Bacon

Beautiful sunsets are one of the blessings the cabin keeps on giving.





Doug and Me Roofing



Sunset on Island Lake