

JESSIE LAKE WATERSHED ASSOCIATION



JESSIE JABBER

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GREETINGS FROM PRESIDENT HAROLD GOETZMAN:

As we look forward to the new lake season, I hope this finds you all well and enjoying the spring weather. I feel very fortunate to be thinking about my favorite place for fishing and recreation, the cabin at Jessie Lake. Usually at this time I struggle with what the goals of the Association should be for the next year and how do we get there, particularly with the water quality issue. This year I think it may be time to sit back and let the reality set in that some things are going to take awhile to accomplish. The start of this year again finds us without an active grant committing us to a large number of volunteer hours. However, we still plan on monitoring the walleye spawning, keeping Spring Creek free of debris, installing loon nesting platforms, water sampling for phosphorous, taking Secchi disk readings for water clarity and finishing the lake maps with parcel locations. We will also have our second annual picnic in late July with hosts Bob and Barb Lewis.

As you may remember, based on the results of our previous Clean Water Partnership (CWP) grant work, we applied for a Phase II grant a year ago. However, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) did not select us for funding. At a recent meeting this past January with our agency partners we agreed to update our application and resubmit it this fall. However, we first needed to apply for a small grant to pay for this work in April that was not successful. The major change on this issue is that the MPCA placed Jessie Lake on the 2004 impaired waters list for excess nutrients (phosphorous). That may not sound like a good thing, but what it does is make us eligible for EPA funding that does not require matching money. It also requires the MPCA to come up with an action plan in three years from the 2005 start date. The first step is to establish a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) based on the groundwork laid out by the completed comprehensive CWP study. Upon completion of writing the TMDL for Jessie Lake and approval from the EPA, funding will be sought to begin implementing management practices to achieve and maintain the TMDL water quality goals. At this point in time we are pretty much in a holding pattern since the workloads and budgets of the various agencies dictate the schedule. I just want to make sure everyone understands that water quality still remains the number one issue for JLWA and we will continue to move forward—it just takes time.

In the meantime, we all need to remember that life is short and one must enjoy the present time and events that bring lifetime memories. Perhaps it is the memory of seeing a wolf or a swan passing by on the water or a magnificent sunset over the lake. We carry these snapshots for days or even years and these small events, offered up from the natural world, leave us with wonder and humility. They have the power to smooth the edges of our civilized world and to put our problems back in perspective. Being good stewards of the water and land can make these events happen and make one feel good about the legacy of our resources being left behind.

SPRING MEETING

Hope to see you all at the spring meeting at 10:00 a.m. **on Saturday May 29th**. Please note that this year **we will meet at the Talmoon VFW hall** due to a conflict in using the Bowstring town hall. The VFW is located about a mile south of Hayslip's on Hwy 6. Come early (9:00 a.m.) and have coffee with your directors and neighbors or maybe meet someone new. The speaker after the business meeting will be Tom Chapin, author and former DNR Conservation Officer for our area.

WATER QUALITY 2003

By Harold Goetzman

During the summer of 2003 we continued to monitor the water quality on Jessie Lake. Equipment was borrowed from the SWCD and the lake was sampled once a month from May through September, or five times. This is the minimum sampling program recommended by the MPCA to give a reasonable summer average. We also measured the Secchi disk transparency or water clarity (underwater distance a white disk can be seen) every two weeks. During this time the lake level fluctuated very little as it only went up about 4 inches at midsummer and ended up about 5 inches below the spring level.

The results of the water sampling for phosphorus and chlorophyll-a indicated that we experienced the best water quality since the summer of 1992. The average phosphorus for 2003 measured 27 parts per billion (ppb) compared to 59, 31, 32, 33 and 41 ppb for the years 1998 through 2002 so the high variability in quality continued. The following table shows the Trophic State Index (TSI) as estimated by phosphorus (TSIP), chlorophyll (TSIC) and Secchi disk (TSIS) for the years we have available data. TSI is the standard parameter used to monitor and compare water quality on all lakes. Since the TSI is a logarithmic scale (0 to 100) each increase of 10 units represents a doubling of total phosphorus or a reduction in water transparency by half.

YEAR	PHOS (ppb)	SECCHI (ft)	TSIP	TSIC	TSIS	MEAN TSI
1986	26	7.5	51	50	48	49.7
1992	24	14.1	50	46	40	45.2
1998	59	5.3	64	61	54	59.6
1999	31	8.2	54	53	47	51.3
2000	32	9.8	54	53	44	50.5
2001	33	8.2	54	55	47	51.8
2002	41	7.6	58	59	48	54.9
2003	27	8.2	52	53	47	50.3

The improvement in water quality last summer may have been due to the weather that we experienced. Last year was a very dry year with rainfall almost 4 inches below normal. In addition, we had a summer with very few windy days and no big storm events other than the hailstorm so erosion was at a minimum. Based on our oxygen/temperature profiles measured during the year it appears the lake maintained a stable thermocline throughout the summer and did not turnover until well into September. Without the frequent turnovers from the wind we did not get the bottom phosphorus coming out of the sediment and mixing into the water column, which kept the average summer phosphorus at a low level. Thus, it appears the roller coaster continues with water quality varying from good to bad depending on the weather.

WHAT DO ALL THOSE NUMBERS MEAN?

By Bill Nelson

When visiting with friends and neighbors about the activities of our watershed association, I hear comments about their difficulties in understanding the water quality data. You probably think discussing water quality data indicates just how exciting my life is, but I prefer to think it shows how interested people are in this information. I usually have trouble remembering whether, for example, a value of 25 parts per billion (ppb) of phosphorus, or for that matter 35, or 45 ppb, indicates good, bad, or ugly conditions in our lakes. Not only are the various numbers confusing but also the words, or

jargon, the scientists use to describe this information. So I thought I would explain how I make sense out of this water quality information in hopes that others might benefit.

Most of the water quality data presented for the four lakes in the watershed have concerned Secchi disk measurements, the amount (parts per billion) of phosphorus and chlorophyll-a in the water. Secchi disk measurements are expressed as how many feet down in the water a white disk 6-inches in diameter can be seen. The greater the depth you can see the disk the cleaner/clearer and less fertile the water. Phosphorus is an important and widely distributed chemical element in the earth's soils and is familiar to everyone as a component of fertilizers. It is measured in lakes to determine how fertile, or productive, they are and some is needed but too much causes problems. Most people remember chlorophyll is the pigment in plants that gives them the green color and is necessary for photosynthesis with chlorophyll-a being the most common and found in 75% of all plants. Measuring how much chlorophyll-a is present in a lake gives an estimate on how much algae, the gunk that turns lakes green in the summer is present, and again some is needed but too much causes problems. Therefore, as the amount of phosphorus and chlorophyll-a increases, the lake becomes more fertile, with algae and aquatic plants becoming more abundant and a greater nuisance. As the plants die and decay they use up the oxygen in the water causing fish kills. However, since the amounts of phosphorus and chlorophyll-a are closely related all we really have to remember are some numbers for phosphorus.

The values obtained for phosphorus, chlorophyll-a, and the Secchi disk are also commonly expressed using Carlson's Trophic State Index (TSI), which is a mathematical adjustment of the original numbers so that water quality by all three measurements can be compared. Useful for people studying a lake over time, but you may not want to get bogged down with understanding that concept.

Scientists group lakes into various categories of which oligotrophic, mesotrophic, and eutrophic are the primary ones. Oligotrophic lakes are considered to have the best water quality, eutrophic lakes the worst, and mesotrophic lakes intermediate water quality. Mesotrophic lakes are relatively clear and productive and are known as the best producers of walleyes. Eutrophic lakes are the most productive and the ones that are only mildly eutrophic can be very good pan fish and bass lakes whereas highly eutrophic lakes may produce mostly carp and bullheads. This category includes the lakes that in mid summer stink from dead fish and the algae slime floating on the surface.

The water quality goal for the lakes in our watershed is to maintain them as mesotrophic, which means they would provide good conditions for fishing and swimming. Therefore, the important thing is to remember the numbers describing this type of lake. This means if the amount of phosphorus is less than 25 ppb and Secchi disk readings are more than 6-feet the water quality in the lake is probably in good shape. As phosphorus increases the water quality declines and when the values reach 50 ppb and the Secchi disk readings are less than 3-feet the lake is in trouble. Therefore, the example I gave at the start of this article for phosphorus of 25 ppb means good water quality, a value of 35 ppb bad, and 45 ppb verges on the ugly.

Now compare the numbers for Jessie Lake in the previous article by Harold Goetzman with the numbers above. It is obvious that Jessie Lake is on the border between good (mesotrophic) and bad (eutrophic) conditions. Therefore, it is imperative to maintain, or better yet enhance, the water quality (levels of phosphorus) in Jessie Lake. The following table shows the water quality data collected in the year 2000 for the lakes in our watershed.

LAKE	PHOSP	SECCHI
SPRING	16	11.8
PETERSON	22	11.4
L.SPRING	29	7.9
JESSIE	32	9.8

By comparing my simplified numbers with those in this table you can see that Spring and Peterson lakes exhibit the best water quality and would be characterized as mesotrophic and Little Spring and Jessie lakes exhibit the poorest water quality and are on the border between the mesotrophic and eutrophic categories.

This has been a gigantic simplification of a complex subject and will probably get me in trouble with the scientists. Hopefully, this will not further confuse you, but will make it easier for you to make sense out of all the water quality data that has been, and will be, collected in the future.

WATER QUALITY AFFECTS LAND VALUE

Duluth News Tribune

A new study of lakes in north-central Minnesota shows that clear water can boost the value of lakeshore property, giving property owners and elected officials a new reason to think about land use and development issues. Researchers at Bemidji State University calculated how much property values would rise or fall on 37 lakes if water clarity improved or worsened. They examined 1205 residential property sales from 1996 to 2001 on lakes in the upper Mississippi River Watershed. The land values were compared with water-quality data for those lakes.

“We concluded that water clarity is very significantly related to the price per foot of lakeshore,” said Charlie Parson, a geography professor and co-author of the study. “We have enough lakes and enough parcels to establish that this is a real relationship.” Parson and Patrick Welle, a professor of economics and environmental studies, projected how property values could change if water clarity increases or decreases. Water clarity, a measure of how deep you can see into a lake, can be affected by pollution, erosion and other factors, such as the removal of shore vegetation.

Leech Lake, for example, is clear to a depth of about 10 feet. The study said that if the water got clearer—so that you could see down another 3 feet—a lake property’s value would rise by \$423 for each foot of frontage. For a 100-foot lakefront lot, that amounts to a \$40,000 gain in value. If the lake’s clarity is reduced by more than 3 feet, the study said, it would cut values by \$594 per frontage foot.

Property values on other lakes could be less dramatically affected by changes in water quality, the study said. Ten Mile Lake in Cass County, which is clear to nearly 22 feet, would see shore frontage rise an estimated \$9 per foot if its water became clearer. Land values would drop by about \$11 per foot if the lake lost more than 3 feet of clarity.

Researchers obtained a \$100,000 grant from the Legislative Commission of Minnesota Resources (LCMR) to conduct the study. The work was done under the direction of the Mississippi Headwaters board, a land-use planning group. Jane Van Hunnik, executive director of the board, said the study could help property owners and elected officials understand that long-term economic value depends on wise decisions about land use. Lakeshore property is under tremendous development pressure, she said, as builders and landowners change the landscape. They need to follow guidelines that are advantageous to good water quality and that prevent erosion and nutrient runoff.

Parson said the worst practices include removing trees, native plants and aquatic vegetation in front of the property, “and then mowing everything down to the water and fertilizing the heck out of it.” He said “the golf-course look” might increase property value in the short term, but such changes by too many owners will eventually alter a lake’s ecology and degrade its water. Property value around a lake could increase or decrease by millions of dollars. What happens to water quality depends partly on local ordinances related to lakeshore development, he added.

Steve Mikkelson, spokesman for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency said the issue of protecting lake water quality is a priority, and the property value study has already generated public discussion. “This may provide some backbone for some of our educational efforts and what we encourage people to do. It certainly has sparked a lot of interest.”

SEPTIC REFRESHER

By Harold Goetzman

I recently attended a three-hour program on Septic System Care and Maintenance that was sponsored by the University of Minnesota Extension Service and Itasca County Zoning. This class was designed to answer some of the basic questions people have on how their septic systems operate and what makes them fail. Included was a copy of the Septic System Owner's Guide put out by the Extension Service that we mailed out to all members two years ago. If anyone needs a copy they can obtain one through the local Extension at the Grand Rapids Regional Center or order it on the Internet by emailing order@extension.umn.edu. Other information can be seen at www.septic.umn.edu.

About 27% of Minnesota homes currently have septic systems and that number is going up as over 30% of the new homes are built with septic systems. Some points were brought up regarding usage that helps protect your system. It is very important to spread the water usage throughout the day and week. For example, wash one load of clothes every other day rather than 3 in the same day and spread the family showers to different times of the day. Also, use liquid no phosphate laundry detergent rather than powders that contain clay fillers and keep the bleach use to a minimum. If possible do not put recharge water from softeners in the septic tank and you should not dispose of paints, medications and chemicals through your septic system. Other suggestions were to not use antibacterial soap, the everyday spray shower cleaner, tidy bowl cleaners, and use gel low-phosphate dishwasher soap. Any kind or brand of toilet paper is now considered OK.

For septic maintenance they recommend pumping the tank a minimum of every 3 years (the State code requirement) whether year around or a seasonal cabin. For heavier usage or if you have frequent guests it should be done more often. The tank should always be cleaned through the manhole and not the inspection pipe. The use of commercial septic tank additives is not recommended for maintenance as none are known to be beneficial. Also, after building a new home it should be pumped the first month to get rid of the construction dust and paint that can ruin your system right away.

Other basic management practices should be followed to protect the soil treatment area. You should mow the drainfield or mound regularly, but do not water or fertilize. Keep heavy vehicles such as cars and snowmobiles off the area. Do not plant trees, place gardens, sand boxes or swing sets on the drainfield. One thing you can do is cut off the inspection pipes so you can mow over them if you like, but don't bury them.

Information regarding what causes systems to freeze, what to do if it freezes and how to prevent it from freezing in the future was also discussed. You can call the University Extension at 800- 322-8642 or visit their website for the details.

PASTUREBALL

By Neil Gustafson

Seven decades ago Jessie Lake Area residents were in the midst of the Great Depression. The year-round population was at its all-time peak (The US Census, taken every ten years, recorded 351 persons living in Jessie Lake Township on April 1, 1940). Most families lived on small farms, subsisting on the food they produced. Cash was earned by selling excess potatoes, milk and forest products. Those who lived on the lakes occasionally rented fishing boats to vacationers during the summer months. Some people had cars and shared rides, but roads were poor. When the "Gut and Liver" (Minneapolis and Rainy River Railroad) picked up its tracks in 1932, it added to the isolation and ended what little commercial dairying remained. Most people were hooked up to a common telephone line, but electricity did not arrive until after the War in 1945.

Four important institutions held the community together during this difficult time: churches, schools, families and baseball. Farm work and school consumed weekdays. Sundays were for church and baseball - church in the morning and baseball in the afternoon. Even during the winter months, preparations for the next baseball season were underway: sewing up old baseballs, carving new bats, mending old equipment, arranging schedules and waiting for the snow to melt.

In the early 1920s there were informal community pick-up baseball games on Sunday afternoons and occasional challenges between the young men of nearby communities. Sunday afternoon was, for most people, the only available

daylight leisure time during the week - and the logical time to get together for a baseball game. As Sunday afternoon baseball became widespread across the county, the profusion of games complicated scheduling and required coordination. Recognizing the value of baseball to rural communities, Itasca County Agent Art Frick helped organize baseball teams, facilities, and leagues across the County. The first baseball league in Itasca County was organized in 1925 and included a joint entry from Jessie Lake and Wirt. Players on that first league entry included Henry Johnson, Herb DeWitt and Frank Rabbit, who became the entrepreneurs of baseball in the Jessie Lake Area. By 1933, Amateur Town Baseball included 34 baseball teams in Itasca County participating in five leagues. There were two leagues for the villages and three for the small rural communities, which included Jessie Lake, Bowstring, Spring Lake, Inger, Sand Lake, Marcell, Wirt, Dora Lake, Deer Lake and Hayslip's Corner (Talmoon). Bigfork, Effie, and Deer River participated mainly in one of the village leagues.

On a typical mid-summer Sunday afternoon in 1933, according to the Grand Rapids Herald-Review, there were some 15 games involving 30 teams, with hundreds of persons attending each game in these weekly community events. Baseball mania reached a frenzy at the County Fair held in Grand Rapids each August, when county champions among villages and rural communities were determined. This level of baseball activity in a county with about 29,000 people at that time represented a phenomenal participation rate - probably as high as any county in the state.

The Jessie Lake ball field was on property owned by Herb DeWitt just south of the Norwegian Church (now gone) and the existing small cemetery. The Spring Lake ball field was about a mile straight south of the present junction of County Roads 4 and 29 on State Forest property along the old county road. Outfield conditions were hazardous, and leg and ankle injuries were not uncommon, recalls Bob Schaar, who played in the outfield at both places. Cutting the grass was an all day Saturday chore if someone could find a lawnmower. Cattle-grazing to keep the grass short was not entirely satisfactory for obvious reasons. In their dried state, cowpies sometimes served as bases, recalls Morris Gauper. A hat was often passed around on game days to help pay for new baseballs. Old baseballs were re-sewn to extend their serviceability. Bats were often home made, carved from ash, birch or willow. Players provided their own gloves, which were often homemade as well. Most players wore their only pair of everyday shoes or boots. Game uniforms were usually sweat pants and shirts. The only catcher's mask and chest protector were used beyond well worn, recalls Bob Schaar. In later years Dave Prestige kept the grass short with his hay mower and team of horses. Playing conditions improved over the years. Home plate was permanently located in the southeast corner of the Jessie Lake ball field. The outfield was defined by a row of trees, holes were filled, infield surfaces were smoothed, backstops and benches were constructed and cattle were evicted.

It is quite remarkable that some fine baseball talent emerged under these conditions. There were no organized development programs for youngsters, such as Little League, Babe Ruth or high school baseball. The older men on the Jessie Lake team, especially Henry Johnson and Herb DeWitt, shared their knowledge and time with the younger players. These included John B. Johnson, Tim DeWitt, Clarence "Casey" Dowling, Bob Schaar, Richard and Leonard Skaja, Loyal Younggren, Bertil Nyberg and others. These aspiring young men practiced with the older town team almost every evening after farm chores were done. The younger boys would shag fly balls, often without shoes or gloves (using the "soft catch" technique) and throwing, catching and hitting using the railroad depot as a backstop.

The vocational agriculture instructor at Deer River High School, Louis Schreiber, who coached the American Legion team in Deer River, made regular trips throughout the school district to inspect agricultural projects during the summer of 1934. This included the Jessie Lake Area where Mr. Schreiber noticed the baseball talent of several young boys. So he arranged his inspection schedule to bring Tim, Bob and Casey to Deer River for American Legion games. Bob could hit and run down fly balls. Tim could throw hard, but wildly. Mr. DeWitt and Mr. Johnson worked with Tim on the fundamentals of pitching and converted Casey into a catcher, managing the game from behind the plate. Casey recalls that his first catcher's mitt was made for him from moose hide by one of the Poole brothers. After High School at Deer River, Casey joined the Civilian Conservation Corps at Day Lake where he both played and helped manage their baseball team. A difficult trip to North Dakota with his cousin Willard Lind to help with the grain harvest in 1939 convinced Casey that he should get an education. That fall he enrolled at the University of Minnesota where he studied Agricultural Education and played four years of baseball.

After graduating from the University, Casey played baseball for Mitby Sathers in the tough Minneapolis City League, then for the AAA Minneapolis Millers in the American Association as a reserve catcher in 1944 and 1945. Casey was an excellent hitter but slow on the bases because of a deformed right foot. This disability made him ineligible for military service. After a short career in professional baseball, Casey continued to play with various semi-professional teams in western and southern Minnesota while teaching agriculture at Watertown, Dassel and St. Peter high schools, and finally retiring from baseball in 1952. Casey now lives with his wife Bonnie in Sun Lakes, Arizona. Casey Dowling has been nominated to the Minnesota Baseball Hall of Fame.

Henry Johnson was the Jessie Lake postmaster, telephone exchange manager, school caretaker, and coordinator of the annual summer festival at Jessie Lake, besides operating his own small store and coaching baseball. During winter months he promoted figure skating and hockey. John, the seventh of nine children of Henry and Anna Johnson, and one of the most promising young Jessie Lake baseball players, enlisted in the marines in 1942 and served in the South Pacific. After

returning in 1945, he was “never quite the same” with moods of depression, according to those who knew him. On June 22, 1948 at the age of 26, he took his own life while cutting wood. Evidence suggests that he was probably afflicted by what is now known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as a result of his wartime experiences.

Herb DeWitt brought his family to Jessie Lake in 1920 and opened the H. J. DeWitt General Merchandise store about two years later. In addition to co-coaching the Jessie Lake team, Herb DeWitt supervised many baseball games as an umpire. Games were played with a single umpire positioned behind the pitcher calling balls and strikes and all fielding plays. Such responsibilities were entrusted only to the most respected citizens, and agreed upon by both teams. Knowledgeable in baseball rules and trusted as an impartial mediator, Herb DeWitt was in demand as an umpire. In 1939 he moved his family to Deer River to be closer to his pole yard business. His son Tim played with the Jessie Lake team until he was drafted into military service. After the War, Tim operated the DeWitt Cedar Yard in Deer River with his brother Bill, until selling the business in 1955. Tim DeWitt lived in Deer River until his death in February 2003.

Bob Schaar played mainly with the Spring Lake team where Frank Rabbit coached him. He worked as a state forester for 36 years, and is now retired with his wife Bernice and living north of Deer River. Richard Skaja, another local standout, was offered a contract to play with Kansas City of the American Association, but joined the Army and later chose a career in the Air Force.

Art Frick served for almost 42 years as the Itasca County Agricultural Agent for the University of Minnesota Extension Service. Mr. Frick was a passionate supporter of baseball in Itasca County. He served as commissioner of Region 13 for the Minnesota Baseball Association and served four terms in the State Legislature from 1962 to 1970. Art Frick was inducted into the Minnesota Baseball Hall of Fame in 1963.

Frank Rabbit played for Jessie Lake as a teenager in 1925 and later played and coached at Spring Lake. Encouraged by Art Frick, Frank Rabbit organized, managed and taught the game of baseball to young Native Americans in the Inger community. In the 1940s and 50s his Inger team won the North Itasca League championship in nine of its first 12 years. In 1953 the Inger team won the regional championship and played in the state tournament, losing only to the eventual state champions. Art Frick called Rabbit “one of the finest athletes - an outstanding hitter and fielder and a model of exemplary conduct and sportsmanship.” Frank Rabbit could have pursued a successful professional baseball career, but chose to organize and teach baseball to younger players with “never a penny of pay”. Frank Rabbit was inducted into the Minnesota Baseball Hall of Fame in 1965.

Leo Hayslip bought the store at Talmoon on Highway 6 from Dick Hoover in 1930 and opened a tavern when prohibition ended. He accepted the advice of Fitger’s Brewery in Duluth, to promote his establishment with a dance hall and a baseball diamond, and they gave him a mahogany bar to get started. That same bar is still in use. The vacant Little Turtle School was moved next to the tavern and used as a dance hall. Mr. Hayslip then constructed a baseball diamond south of the dance hall and assembled a baseball team by enticing players from other teams. Casey Dowling accepted Leo’s offer of an ice cream cone for each game he played, with a double dip for an especially well played game! This reportedly led to some disagreement over the definition of “well played”. Mr. Hayslip succeeded in assembling championship baseball teams in the late 1930s. With a little sociability after the games, his enterprise became wildly successful. Morris Gouper recalls the many cars of baseball fans parked along Highway 6 on Sunday afternoons. But this new image for baseball (or was it an old image?) was at the expense of some community support!

Baseball, an adaptation of the English game of cricket, had its beginnings in Eastern cities in the early 19th Century and spread relentlessly westward as the frontier was settled. Community standards in the 19th century held that pleasurable physical activities were vulgar and sinful. These included dancing, drinking, gambling, prize fighting, horse racing, billiards, burlesque and baseball - which was derisively called “pastureball” by some. Idle hands were believed to contribute to idle minds, laziness, greed and moral decadence. Most rural folks subscribed, in practice at least, to John Calvin’s edict that wasting time and pleasurable indulgences were evil. In one notable case, Dave Prestige, an elder in the Jesse Lake Lutheran Church, was suspended for playing baseball on Sunday. While the Lutherans seemed somewhat tolerant and forgiving of errant behavior, the Swedish Baptists were unconditionally opposed to baseball on Sunday, emphasizes Bob Schaar.

Most rural people considered themselves virtuous as evidenced by their hard work and wariness of leisure and its temptations. So how did industrious rural people get mixed up with this corruptive activity called baseball? Perhaps people just liked to play and watch the game - and they were determined to do so in spite of the moralists. Furthermore, they experienced benefits to themselves and their communities. Baseball exemplified the American virtue of working hard to achieve success. Its supporters argued that baseball enhanced both competition and cooperation - traits observed and revered by Alexis de Tocqueville in his travels across America.

Just as amateur baseball was **the** major weekly social event in Itasca County during the summer, so were local baseball players the heroes whom people knew personally. Many had heard of Babe Ruth, Ted Williams and Ty Cobb, but there was little information about them or interest in professional sports. The professional Minneapolis Millers and St. Paul Saints of the American Association were 200 miles away and attracted little interest. In the 1930’s there was no electricity

and no radio - and of course no television to broadcast news or sporting events. Some people received the weekly Deer River News, which provided space on the front page to report local baseball results.

During WWII amateur and professional baseball activity was greatly reduced and diluted as many athletes joined the war effort. Furthermore, gas and materials were rationed and travel restricted. After WWII there was a strong, but brief, baseball revival that faded after about a decade. Many former baseball players were drawn to distant places and new opportunities. Economic conditions changed. Rural, as well as city residents, were experiencing a new prosperity. Now people could afford to buy new cars and travel long distances on improved roads. People acquired conveniences and luxuries that had not been available before the war, including television sets, boats with motors, and lake cabins. Families could now take weekend trips to fish, camp, swim and relax. In the 1950s television brought major-league sports and other entertainment directly into people's homes. Beginning in 1961, the major league Minnesota Twins captured people's attention across the state, supplanting their hometown amateur teams. For many people, interest in baseball changed from a participatory community activity to a passive spectator sport.

At the state level, amateur baseball activity reached its peak in about 1950, with over 800 town teams across the state. The Itasca County baseball participation peak probably was reached about a decade earlier before the War. In 2004 there are no amateur town baseball teams representing Itasca County among the 130 teams registered with the Minnesota Baseball Association.

With the decline of small town baseball something was lost in the fabric of communities. New conditions were brought about by a changing world, including new technologies in communications, transportation and marketing that were beyond the control of local communities. Now most rural baseball diamonds in Itasca County are neglected and overgrown - some have been returned to pasture or woodland. After baseball, the Jessie Lake diamond was used as a dump and landfill. Was this the symbolic last word and appraisal from baseball's disparagers?

If we take a walk behind the old cemetery at Jessie Lake, along the old county road south of Spring Lake, or south of Hayslip's, we might still hear the voices of happy competitors and cheering throngs of community loyalists enjoying a Sunday afternoon at their "field of dreams".

Note: For these historic reflections, many thanks to Casey Dowling, Bob Schaar, Walter Hagen, Olga Lindgren Wise, Morris Gauper, Willard Lind, Joan Isaacs, the Deer River News, the Western Itasca Review, the Grand Rapids Herald-Review, the Itasca County Historical Society, and the Minnesota Historical Society.

MEET BOB LEWIS - ARTIST OF THE JLWA LOGO

Bob was born and raised in Southern Minnesota and spent most of his life there except for four years of military duty. He and his wife, Barb, have two married daughters and five grandchildren. They moved to Jessie Lake from Owatonna, MN in April of 2001 and enjoy the great outdoors and the wonderful people of the area.

Bob has always been interested in the out-of-doors, hunting, fishing, observing and studying nature and photographing wildlife. He always enjoyed drawing and sketching and started painting in the mid 1960's, using acrylic or watercolor or a combination of the two. Bob uses photos, slides, taxidermy mounts, past experiences and memory to compose and do the painting.

Many original paintings have been donated by Bob to Ducks Unlimited, Minnesota Pheasants, Ruffed Grouse Society, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Minnesota Deer Hunters Association and many other local and state organizations. He has also entered the Federal Duck Stamp contest and many different state stamp competitions, and although never winning, has placed in the top 5 several times. Bob continues to paint on a commission basis; for fundraisers, sales, art shows and displays and his own personal satisfaction, averaging 10 to 15 originals a year.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

JLWA Logo. The final version of the new JLWA logo is completed and a few sweatshirts and hats will be made to have on display at the spring meeting. The plan at this time will be to take orders since there are so many colors and sizes that keeping an inventory would be difficult. Bob did a great job revising the art to make the embroidery work.

Airplane Rides. For the past couple years a plane has offered rides from Jessie View Resort during the period mid-June to mid-August giving a nice view of the Watershed area. The ride is usually 30-

minutes and was \$30/person with a two-person minimum. Last year it went on Thursday, but you can call Jessie View Resort (842-3678) for details and a reservation.

Nature Programs. The US Forestry Service has been offering a weekly Naturalist Program at either the visitor's center on Hwy 46 or the Marcell Community Center. A listing of the programs will be available at Jessie View Resort (832-3678) or you can contact the centers. The web site www.edgeofthewilderness.org is also a good source of information for what is going on in our area.

DID YOU KNOW?

By Harold Goetzman

- Only people who do things get criticized.
- An organism is considered *Exotic* (alien, foreign, non-native) when it has been introduced by humans to a location outside its native or natural range.
- A fen is a bog with fresh water flowing into it from springs and thus, has a different type of fauna than found in most bogs.
- Pitcher plants are found in fens and are a carnivorous eating plant. They hold water that drowns the flies and bugs they eat.
- Four men face criminal charges, civil penalties and restitution in excess of \$5000 for damaging a wetland with four-wheel-drive mud trucks in the Crow Wing State Forest.
- There are 75 million mothers in USA. In 1914 Congress set the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day, which is May 9th this year.
- The DNR has set the MN fishing opener as the Saturday two weeks before Memorial Day, which this year is May 15th and it is the first time in many years that it does not fall on Mother's Day.
- A good use for the minnow plastic bags is for disposal of the ashes from your fire pit.
- A Cornell University study found that kids who can see plants and trees from their windows often have less stress.
- Minnesota is the only state in the Mississippi flyway that restricts the use of spinning wing decoys for duck hunting.
- The DNR has stocked an average of 2.3 million fingerlings per year since the new Accelerated Walleye Program was fully funded in 2000. This year the goal will be increased to over 3 million fingerlings.
- The State Bird is the loon, which was set by the Legislature in 1961.
- The Norway or red pine was designated the State Tree in 1953.
- A new MN wetland program was designed to improve water quality by curbing runoff while restoring wildlife habitat. Really?? Hard to believe how long it takes to see the obvious.
- The most common lake name in both Minnesota and Wisconsin is "Mud Lake".
- You should remember to throw back the big ones and eat the smaller fish, which are better for your health as they contain less mercury.
- There were no cases of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in any deer tested in MN last year.
- On March 23rd this year there were 822 bald eagles counted by two Duluth bird counters, which was a new North American record for a single-day spring eagle migration.
- The ice went out on Jessie Lake this year on April 24th, 2004 with the average being April 23rd.
- There is no secret for a long-lasting marriage—just love each other from the beginning.

MEMBERSHIP

The JLWA presently has 82 paid members. If you have not paid your dues send \$10 to Dale Hertle, 47104 Bellamy Road, Talmoon, MN 56637.