

Moose Lake News

As I am writing this on Sunday afternoon while we are getting some light snow. Perhaps about one inch with more to come. This past week Rob Sparhawk and I went on a 39- mile snowmobile ride. I do not ride very much, but just enough to get out and enjoy the beauty that we have in our back woods. You see so much more when you get off the main roadway. Another way to enjoy the back country is to hop on a train and go for a trip. Several years ago, my wife and I took a trip out to the State of Washington on the Amtrack Empire Builder from Minneapolis to Spokane. It was so relaxing, and the scenery was fantastic. This snowmobile ride reminded me of that trip.

Mike Dombeck called me a little over a week ago to ask me if I would be interested in another article about the Moose Lake area. I told him sure, what it's about? He told me that there was a bar and an old time, grocery store located on Moose Lake Rd. & Fullington Rd. Dave Mania presently owns this property. Here is what Mike sent me.

Baker's Bar, Bait and Groceries

A small white garage can be seen in the trees just south of the intersection of Moose Lake Road and Fullington Road. This is all that remains of what was a thriving local hot spot from the mid-1960's to the mid-1970's. Baker's Bar, Bait and Groceries became a regular stop for bait and beer, well mostly beer. To all of us it was just called Harry Baker's. It was on the north end of the lake just off the Moose lake Road.

An October 6, 1960 piece in the Sawyer County Record described the lake as follows: "There is a new lake in Sawyer County – its name is Metcalf Lake. It covers 70 acres and is in the Town of Round Lake.... A year ago, William Metcalf started to build a dam across Steed Creek. It was a big project for one man. However, he stuck with it and today, he has a beautiful 70-acre lake all on his own property...." Harry and Shirley Baker, seeing the opportunity, bought the lake and surrounding property in the 1960's from the Metcalf's. Like all newly flooded bodies of water, the lake was a highly productive "minnow factory."

Harry trapped and sold minnows and opened a bait shop. As a youngster, I remember Harry coming to the Moose Lake Store always wearing hip boots as part of his everyday attire. Soon Harry and Shirley added a selection of basic groceries and beer to the inventory. Harry was a great storyteller and it seemed had been everywhere and done nearly everything. Tex Maina recalls Harry telling him that when people come to buy bait, many would buy a six pack of beer and sit there to visit and drink the six-pack. Harry said to Tex, "If they're going to sit around here, drink their beer and talk, I might as well open up a bar."

For the 10 or so years the Bakers were in business Harry and Shirley drew a very loyal following of customers. People came not only from Moose Lake and Hayward but from miles around to have one or more beers, usually more. The décor was simple, and the restrooms were old time privies which did not seem to bother anyone, even on subzero winter nights. Harry rarely checked IDs. No TV was needed to keep customers occupied at Baker's bar. Harry's friendly demeanor and captivating stories were enough. To top it off Shirley would often bring out food and snacks for all to enjoy especially for birthdays and anniversaries. I still recall her bringing out a big platter stacked high with bologna sandwiches.

Harry and Shirley did not drink beer, but Harry always had a cup of coffee close by -- day or night. By the mid 1970's, as age began to creep up on them as it does with all of us, they sold the property to the Maina Family. Harry and Shirley moved back to their home area of Cumberland to retire. Baker's Bait, Groceries, and Bar is long gone, but for many of us fond memories remain. Thanks Mike for your interesting story.

Pool league had 6 players this past Thursday evening. The First-place prize was awarded to Tom Koehler and Ron Neitzel. Second place went to Dean Broberg and Brad Daywitt. The TP award was given to Roger Winters and Joan Linahon. A fun time was had by everyone. I felt bad that I had to miss Pool League, but I will be back this week. It is too much fun to miss two weeks in a row.

Birthday greetings this week are extended to Debbie Laier of the 25th, Barb Figlewicz on the 27th, Sara Miller on March 1st & Dave Arnett on March 3rd. We have two anniversaries in the neighborhood this week. Dick and Sue Kruckenberg on February 25th & Jan Stapleton and Joe Dwyer on March 1st. Happy Birthday and Happy Anniversary to all. That is all for another week. Enjoy the mild weather and stay safe. Please send your news to Jonarheim@centurytel.net or call 715-462-4448.