

FISHING, FAMILY, AND THE BOUNDARY WATERS: REMEMBERING LYNN DAVIS



Sandra and Lynn Davis, with their boys Chris and Justin in one of the many deliberately cheesy photos they made them pose for.

The outfitter warned them that there had been a lot of bear encounters on Knife Lake that year. Bears were coming into camps, tearing through packs, and it was likely that Lynn and Sandra Davis, along with their two boys Justin and Chris, would have issues as well.

"Don't bother banging pots or yelling if you see one – that wouldn't do anything to deter a curious or hungry bear," the outfitter said. "What you need to do was take a fist-sized rock and aim for the bear's stomach. Hit it there and that will scare it off."

They weren't sure if the outfitter was joking or not, but his advice clicked

with the softball player in Lynn. Later, after they had made camp and ate, he stacked several softball-sized rocks outside of both the tents – just in case.

Shortly after going into his tent for the night, Lynn heard a huffing and snorting sound. Sure enough, it was a bear. Wasting no time, he stepped out of the tent, and yelled, "Mr. Bear! Get the hell out of here!" When that didn't work, he picked a rock from the pile he had put aside and hurled it at the bear, hitting it square in the stomach. The bear scurried away, leaving them to a peaceful night of sleep.

In the morning the two boys, who had slept through the entire incident, were

upset their parents didn't wake them up to see the bear.

This is one of countless stories from almost fifty years of canoe trips Lynn Davis took with his family to the Boundary Waters and Quetico. These trips left a deep impression on everyone who participated and are part of a robust legacy left by Lynn Davis, who passed away on February 26, 2023.

Growing up on a farm in Iowa, Lynn loved fishing. Shortly after earning his degree in electrical engineering and marrying Sandra, the new couple moved to Minnesota. They took a fishing trip into Canada, just east of Lake of the Woods. It was during that time they thought, why not try to take a trip into the Boundary Waters? Neither of them knew what to do or what a canoe trip in the wilderness would entail, but they managed to convince two friends, Bonnie Gray and Darwin Hendel, to join them. The four of them borrowed gear, rented two canoes and for a week, and more or less figured things out as they went.

Most importantly, they figured out that they loved it up here.

Their first son Chris spent his first birthday in a canoe. Always inventive, the couple had strapped a porta crib in the center of the canoe and Chris, in his life jacket, was free to play and soak in the northern surroundings.

They had a second son, Justin. Though busy with their family and

careers – Lynn was an executive in telecommunications, Sandra earned a PhD in counseling psychology and founded a leadership consultation firm – their annual trips to the Boundary Waters were mandatory, a staple of their family life.

Lynn loved everything about the Boundary Waters – the sense of timelessness, the beauty, the solitude and opportunity to get closer with those he loved – but fishing and photography were his abiding passions while traveling through canoe country.

As the years went by, their children grew and had children of their own. This led to several trips that brought together three generations on canoe trips.

"My dad and mom have lived amazing lives," Chris Davis says. "They have lived

at the top of their fields in business and leadership for as long as I have known. They have traveled the world and set foot on every continent – most more than once. But they have loved the Boundary Waters and the simplicity, self-reliance and vulnerability it brings. I believe the Boundary Waters helped make my parents the amazing people they are and were."

Lynn's last trip to the Boundary Waters was in 2018, 48 years after their first trip. In a remarkable feat of symmetry, this final trip was taken with Bonnie and Darwin, the couple with whom they first explored the Boundary Waters.

Everyone knew that after retirement, Lynn had become increasingly concerned about the BWCA. After he passed, the Davis family collected donations for his beloved BWCA and

asked Friends of the Boundary Waters if there was something more they could do. Sandra suggested that perhaps all donations could be used for something permanent, to preserve that feeling of timelessness Lynn treasured.

The family decided to put forth an additional matching gift to inspire others to give during our May *Open Water* fundraiser, earmarking their gift toward the purchase and conservation of land along the Kawishiwi River.

We are delighted to report that their matching gift was fully matched, largely by new supporters. Now, this plot of land is that much closer to being permanently protected. We thank the Davis family immensely for their support, and perhaps more importantly, for sharing their love of the Boundary Waters with each other and with friends. 🌲



Three generations of the Davis family on a trip to the Boundary Waters