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SPECIAL REPORT: Door County

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## NATURAL RESOURCES

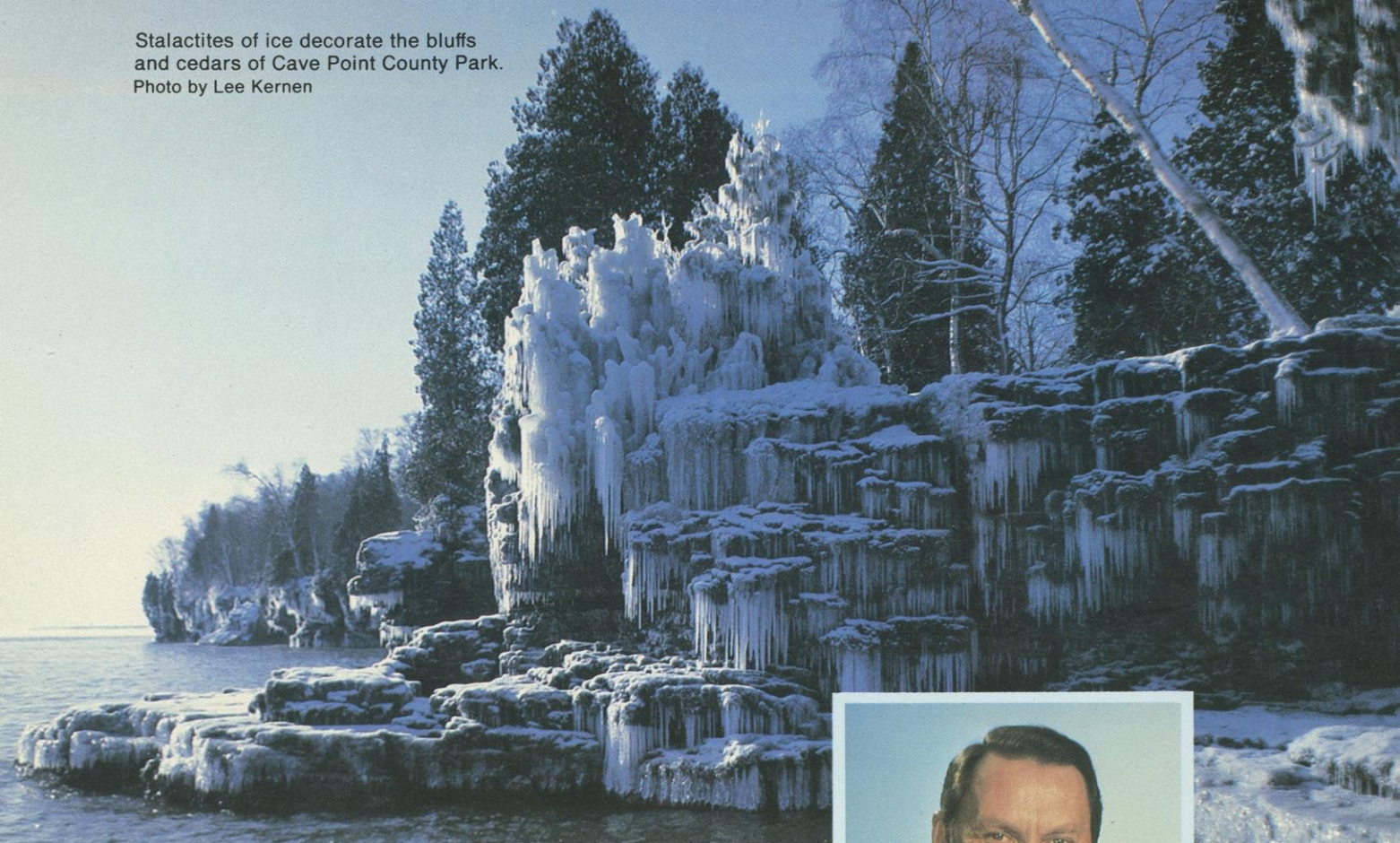
May-June 1986

Volume 10, Number 3



**DOOR COUNTY, USA:**  
the place everybody loves





# Door—a county at the crossroads

C. D. “Buzz” Besadny,  
Secretary, Department of Natural Resources



DNR photo

Door County is a singularly well loved and blessed place. At a time when jet travel and global communications are diluting regional characteristics, Door County is still largely itself.

And at a time of unprecedented social, environmental and economic change, the county is still a sanctuary for much that is natural, rural and traditional.

Its beauty, climate, coastline and quality of life attract tens of thousands of visitors, some of whom stay to live. It is written about, painted, photographed and in places, preserved, by people who cherish it. It has a unique identity as a county. It is a fortunate place.

But Door County has choices to make.

It is poised between the past and the future, at a time of rapid change. Like most counties, and most people, it isn't certain about the future or how much of the past it should retain.

Residents of the county haven't yet determined how to tackle major decisions. Should they attempt to control its future through planning, legislation and consensus or should it be left to “market forces?” Like most counties, and most people, Door County isn't sure.

What is sure is that Door County is at a turning point. It's changing, but much of the change is not yet irrevocable. There is still time to make decisions and take action, if the county's residents feel they should. But there isn't much time.

Door County can decide to take responsibility for its future, or it can drift. It can wander, or it can set objectives and take the initiative. It can make some sacrifices of its own choosing in an effort to gain control over its destiny, or it can turn the future over to chance or the highest bidder — and, inevitably, make other kinds of sacrifices in the process.

The choices the county faces are numerous. It can pursue a course of unbridled development, or it can attempt to preserve its environment and scenic beauty. It can watch its farms and orchards disappear, or it can take firm steps to keep them alive. It can base its economy on tourism and accommodation or it can attempt to diversify. It can keep its gates open or selectively close them. None of these alternatives is absolutely right or wrong, and logical choices may follow a middle road. But intentionally or otherwise, choices will be made.

Within the stern limits set by Door County's environment and geology, various courses of action are possible. But with each passing year, the options dwindle. What can Door County become? What should it become? What do its residents want? Will they ever agree? Today, there are no answers to these questions. Only the people of Door County, deciding for themselves, can answer them. For it is their attitudes and beliefs that will shape the Door County of tomorrow.

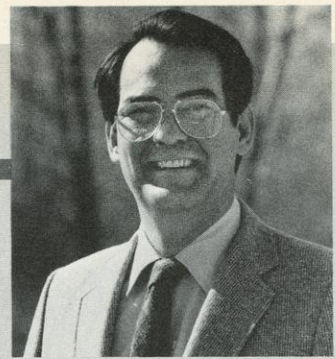
Lovers of Door County wait, and wonder.



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\* Map key by Gene Roark on pages  
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Charles E. Higgs.  
DNR Photo

In January, 1985, I asked Dave Crehore to put together a special Door County issue of *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine. Dave is the public information officer for the Department of Natural Resources' Lake Michigan District office in Green Bay, and has lived most of his life near Door County, in Manitowoc and Green Bay.

It was Dave's idea to focus the issue on the county's assets, concerns and problems, rather than on Department of Natural Resource concerns. It was his goal, as well, to let residents of the county write many of the articles and express themselves in interviews.

So our special issue is, as Dave puts it, a sketchbook written to celebrate the county's beauty, but also to provoke thought and debate, through the words of Door County people as much as possible.

I hope you enjoy and are stimulated by this unique special issue of our magazine.

Charles E. Higgs, Director, DNR Lake Michigan District

**To our readers:**  
We hope you find this  
special report on Door  
County interesting and  
provocative. If you have  
insights and reflections  
about Door County to  
share, please write us at  
*Wisconsin Natural  
Resources*, Box 7921,  
Madison, WI 53707.

Thanks to all the photogra-  
phers and artists who  
responded to our plea for  
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who responded.

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# Door County

## *a sketch for a portrait*

Dave Crehore

**The risk in putting together a magazine about a place you're fond of is that you will let your feelings interfere. It was hard for me to take off the cherry-colored glasses, to look beyond the beauty, to think beyond the good memories. It was a lot harder to find meanings, to see clearly, to make reasonable generalizations, to catch the spirit of an entire county. Because I must admit that I love Door County, more now than ever.**

Like many of those who have developed a fondness for the Door, I'm a refugee from the blast furnaces of the industrial middle-west. Until I was about seven, my family lived in Lorain, Ohio, a steel town which at that time had spectacularly dirty air — air with real character, air you could see. In those days, Lorain was a perennial candidate for the spiritual capitol of the Rust Belt; a city sacrificed to the furnaces that lit up the summer nights and denatured the Christmas snow.

Then we moved to Manitowoc and started making day trips to Door County soon after that. I liked Manitowoc well enough, but it didn't take me long to realize that the Door was different. The swimming at Sand Bay, the fishing in the Mink River, the endless supply of skipping stones on the Lake Michigan beaches, the white clapboard villages, the slower pace, the sense of insularity — all were pieces of the small-town childhood I had missed.

I still go to Door County. And being there still makes me feel about the same as it did in 1950: away from a lot of things I don't care for, and closer to a lot I wish I could have. I've never lived there, and yet it feels like home, and I worry about it.

With that as preamble, you'll understand why this issue cannot be dispassionate, and is certainly not a definitive work on Door County. Instead, it's really a sketchbook for a larger and more detailed portrait that the people of Door County — and the passage of time — may paint for us. The intent is to provoke thought and debate, through the words of Door County people as much as possible. The concern is for the Door County environment: in part the aspects that the Department of Natural Resources regulates or manages, but most important, the far greater part of that environment for which the people of Door County must accept responsibility.

My work on this issue erased some old misconceptions and revealed many new ideas. I talked to a cross-section of people — not a scientific sample of the county, to be sure, but a selection of people who had opinions and were willing to express them.

I tried to grasp what was going on, both the facts and the feel. In the process, I encountered a satisfying degree of acceptance and outright, simple hospitality, for which I am grateful. People throughout the county share many of the same worries, and agree with each other on many basic issues. There is a depth of concern that goes beyond dollars and politics. Of course, I also found some hostility and hypocrisy, but not much.

### Conclusions and Conflicts

What I learned can be boiled down to a few related conclusions and conflicts.

1. I believe, along with most residents that nothing is more important to Door County's long-term economic success and quality of life than protection of its natural environment. The environment is the key; the quality most endangered.

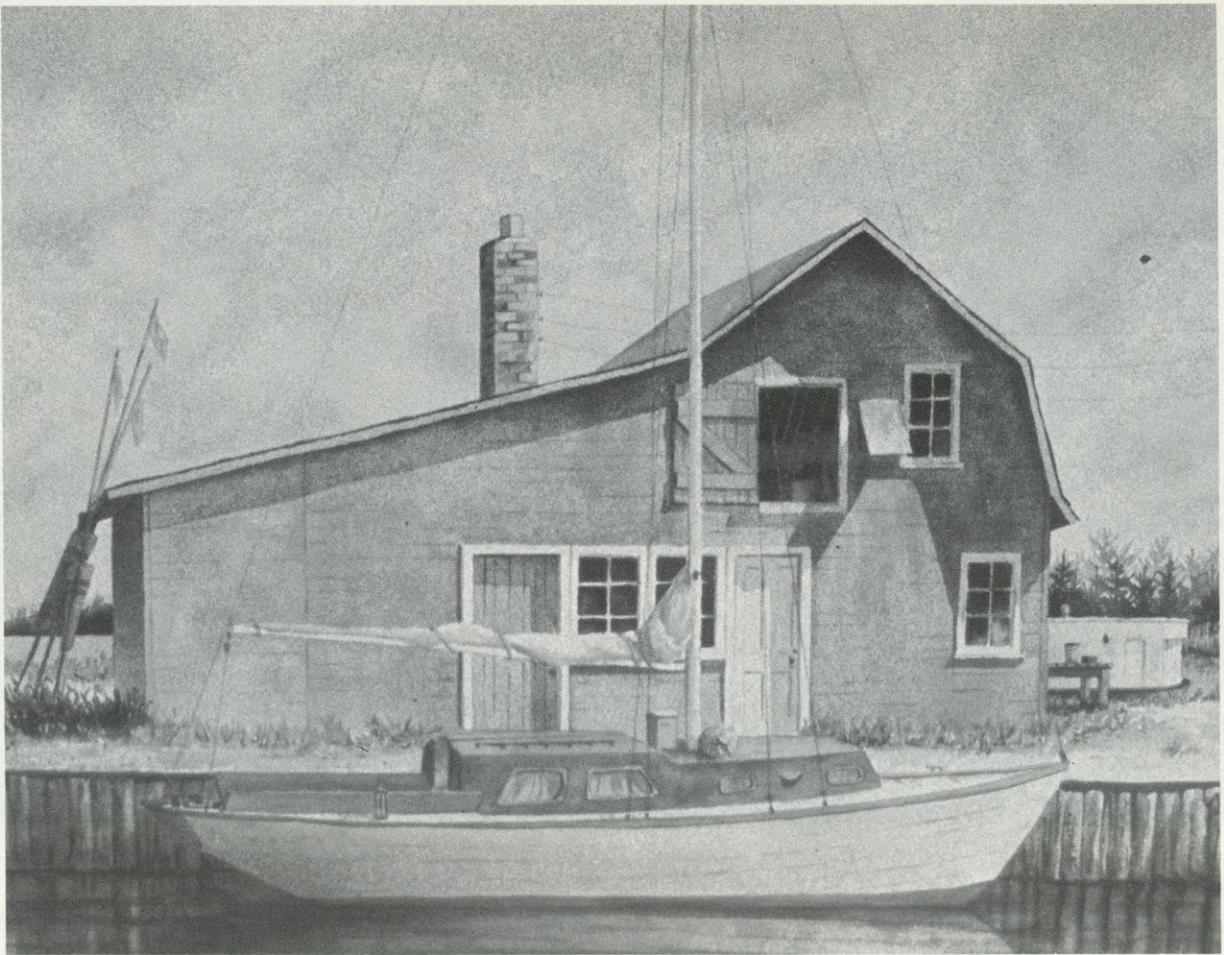
2. The fate of Door County's natural environment is in the hands of its people. It depends almost entirely on what they think and what they do. State and federal agencies can get involved, but effective rules to further protect the environment must be home-drafted and adopted village by village, town by town. No one else can take full responsibility.

3. People are concerned about the future of the place in which they live but have not determined what to do. As a group, Door County people do not visualize objectives for their county. This is because they are not "a group". Despite their strong sense of county identity, they, like most of us, are not used to working together in large numbers on long-term goals.

As for the conflicts, they seem to represent opposite sides of prominent characteristics of Door County's people and landscape. They define the county and point to both problems and solutions:

1. **The first involves county identity.** No other place has a stronger sense of itself as a county. "Door County USA" bumper stickers are common, but have you ever seen one that says "Brown (or any other) County USA?" This strong sense of place is nurtured by the fact that northern Door is virtually an island — actually a remote part of Wisconsin. In addition, there are no large urban places. The total permanent population is only about 20,000. Sturgeon Bay, the only city, has less than 9,000 and permanent populations of the villages are mostly in the hundreds. The population has always been small — in 1970, for instance, it was about 19,000 — so the county is really a kind of stretched-out small town. People tend to know each other and have a sense of shared history and experience. Door also has a county chamber of commerce and promotes and describes itself as a county.





*Mooring at Washington Island* by Artist Fawn Shillinglaw, 1952 Palisades Dr., Appleton, 54915

This strong county identity has its advantages and drawbacks. On one hand, it inspires a sense of community. But it can also turn into defensiveness. Some residents feel that they must constantly fight off change and interference from the "outside," and do so almost indiscriminately. Long-time residents tend — with good reason — to feel that they are being overwhelmed by immigrants from the cities, and as a result stratify their society into various layers of "natives" and "newcomers", "outsiders" and "summer people." You sense a love-hate relationship with the well-heeled outsiders who probably outnumber the original natives, but who also supply much of the county's real income and tax base. So when problems arise, the population tends to split into factions, rather than to coalesce.

**2. Next is the Door County "character."** This is strongly related to its sense of place and identity. As one of my interviewees put it, Door County people are "survivors," who have put up with the worst aspects of rural and small-town life, along with generations of near-poverty. As a result, they have developed remarkable qualities of independence, enterprise and self-reliance. The other side is that this independence sometimes turns into stubbornness and suspicion. Enterprise can easily slip over the line into careless pursuit of the buck. A few prefer to duck the responsibility for problems that are rightfully theirs, to deny realities they must accept, and blame their troubles on "outsiders," state government and other whipping boys.

Yet, anyone familiar with the county knows those attitudes are fading. People are beginning to tackle problems effectively. If you put Door County out of your mind for a moment, and consider the people simply as people, you find that residents there are pretty much like everyone else, only more so.

**3. Beauty versus fragility is another conflict.** The qualities of Door County's natural environment — its landscape, shoreline, waters, climate and natural vegetation — are its principal attraction. It is extravagantly blessed with beauty and without the beauty, the county

People tend to know each other and have a sense of shared history and experience.

would have remained little more than a long, narrow rural place.

The drawback of the beauty is its fragility. The shallow, fractured limestone that forms the bluffs, headlands and rocky shorelines also creates problems with water supplies and waste disposal. The Door County environment is singularly intolerant of pollution and lacks the resilience of natural systems elsewhere. This combina-





Migrating mallards rest in a Sturgeon Bay park.

Photo by Jan Gigstead

tion of rare environmental beauty and extreme fragility is the most serious of the Door County conflicts.

**4. Love and abuse are sometimes closely related.**

The sequence of events is as old as Door County: Visitor comes, visitor loves, visitor stays. To love Door County is to want to possess a piece of it and for a couple of generations now, people have loved Door County to pieces. Of course, each piece has to be modified a little to make it convenient and habitable. Repeat that process a couple of thousand times and you have massive change leading to abuse, even with the best of intentions. As Door County writer Norbert Blei told me, "It ends with the thing being gone" — the intangible quality that was so desired slips away, bit by bit.

**5. And last is the county's "Role."** In my conversations, a frequent topic was the county's purpose. What was it supposed to be? Had it been ordained by the Almighty to serve as host and refuge for thousands of city people? Was it merely a destination, to be bought and sold by "outsiders?"

The long-time residents pointed out something that outsiders frequently miss: that first and foremost, Door County is home. To the people who live there, it is a place in which to live and make a living, where family roots go deep.

But the county's economy, for better or worse, is based upon pleasure, entertainment, accommodation. To the outsider, it is a place for recreation and relaxation, a place to invest, possibly to retire.

The backgrounds and motivations of the long-time residents and the temporary residents could not be more different, but their interests are intertwined. What should the county be? Should its landscape and resources simply be exploited until they are gone, like the pine forests

of the previous century? If environmental conflicts are the most serious at the moment, the long-term questions of the county's future role and objectives are probably the most difficult and profound.

But let's retain a sense of perspective. Door County's conflicts and problems are serious but not unique and we should not allow their intensity to cloud the issue. Other places have development problems, population problems, environmental problems. And other places are trying to solve them, through cooperation, planning, and sacrifice.

To love Door County is to want to possess a piece of it and for a couple of generations now, people have loved Door County to pieces.

As Door County artist Joe Cook put it, "Systems don't solve problems, people solve problems. Self-interest drives our society; regulation and cooperation keep it from being unjust."

Door County has natural qualities that distinguish it from other counties. But its people must develop a view of the future and attempt to master the present like people anywhere. Door County is no different, no better, no worse. It is everycounty.





The shallow north end of Kangaroo Lake is one of Door County's unique environments. Photo by Roy Lukes

# Before they're gone:

## *Door County resources in need of preservation*

Roy Lukes, Manager, The Ridges Sanctuary, Baileys Harbor

***“The bluffs, shorelines, lakes, vistas, clean water, woodlands and sunny meadows will disappear or be changed beyond recognition unless enough people care.”***

Promoters of Door County tourism sometimes refer to our wonderful peninsula as “the Cape Cod of the Midwest.” But those who really understand the natural beauty of this county could just as easily call Cape Cod “the Door County of the East!” There’s no need for this unique land mass to play second fiddle to any other part of the country.

Ask the natives, the retirees and the tourists what is so appealing about the county and why they chose the Door as a place to settle or visit. Their answers will vary, but most will mention the quiet, the rural aspects of the life and landscape, the many

miles of shoreline, the expanses of Green Bay and Lake Michigan, and the great natural beauty. Outdoor types will hail the excellent fishing, sailing, swimming and cross-country skiing. Retirees will note the solitude, safety and cultural activities.

Today, many people use the extraordinary resources and qualities that make Door County special: its limestone cliffs and escarpments, spectacular shorelines, its lakes and countryside — in other words, its natural beauty. But with privilege comes responsibility. These special physical features are so precious they must be cared for with vigor and kept in their natural state for future generations.

The slogan “Door County — Where Nature Smiles for Miles and Miles” is used by promoters and probably refers to our more than 250 miles of shoreline. But only a few of those miles are open to the public for bathing, fishing or hiking. Boaters can enjoy them from a distance, but typically the shore cannot be approached from inland. It’s mostly private. Demand for a lake or bay view is so great de-





Windswept Baileys Harbor beach shows the signs of high water and erosion. Photo by Roy Lukes

velopers have been forced to promote lots and parcels on the ancient post-glacial lake shores that rise a hundred feet or more above the present water level, some a mile or more from the water's edge.

Door County has inland waters, as well. A study called "Surface Water Resources of Door County," compiled by the Wisconsin Conservation Department in 1965, pinpoints lakes and streams that contribute to the county's diversity of wildlife and scenery. It's astonishing to note, however, that 16 of the county's 25 lakes, ponds, marshes and swamps have no public access. Perhaps this is all very well, and contributes to their preservation.

The largest lakes — Clark, Kangaroo and Europe — all have limited public access. Europe Lake, the most northerly, is lucky to be bounded on its east shore by Newport State Park. This large lake should receive special management and protection. The two deepest lakes in the county have no public access. They are Mackaysee Lake, (26 feet) and Krause Lake (24 feet), both located on Chambers Island.

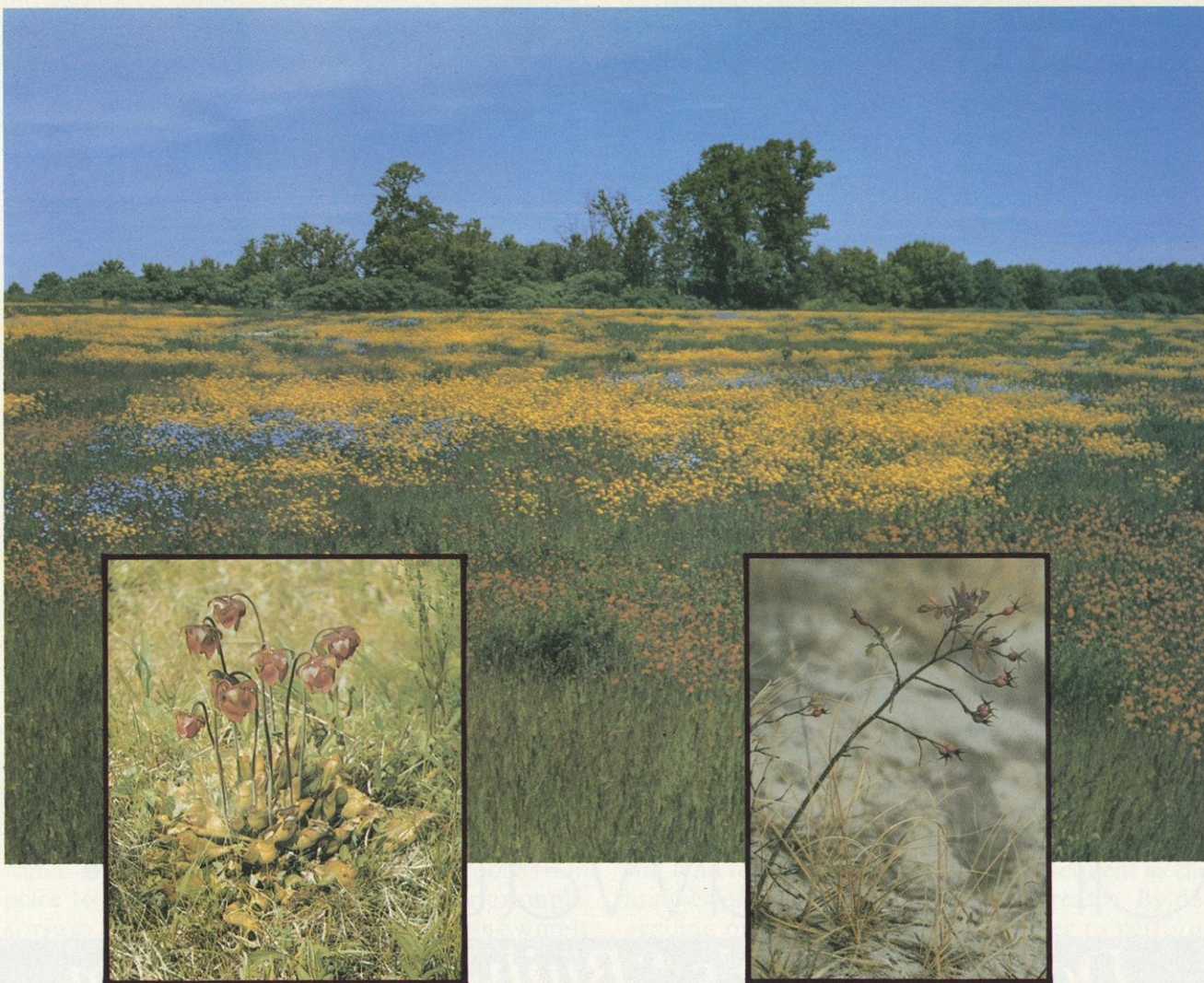
All of Door's 93 miles of stream originate in the county, and access to them by boat is difficult. Nevertheless, each stream should be carefully monitored and bordering farms and orchards should be

managed to prevent water pollution. Hibbard, Heins and Rieboldt Creeks are heavily used by fishermen, and as a result their banks are eroding badly in places. Several stretches of these creeks have become eyesores, reflecting poorly on the ethics and habits of some outdoor users. These and other creeks need immediate help.

Door County's five state parks are important to the welfare of the county: their value cannot be overestimated. The two wilderness-type state parks, Newport and Rock Island, contain valuable plant habitats and need especially strong management.

Not to be overlooked are Door County's 29 town parks. Some include bathing beaches and are vulnerable to abuse. Proper management of these parks can be difficult, but generally they are outstanding and important to retain. Twelve county parks attract many people throughout the year. Each has unique features in need of preservation. The exquisite post-glacial lake terrace at Robert LaSalle County Park and the exposed Maquoketa shale "skillet" rapids at Sugar Creek County Park are good examples. The county parks have had a history of problems and many feel that solutions must be found, so that the parks can continue to operate.





The Niagara Escarpment, which is the county's limestone backbone, needs more attention and preservation. Fortunately, a few choice portions, including some of the magnificent, towering headlands, have been saved within state, county and town parks along the northwest shore. But more could be done. For example, many people relish the idea of a continuous hiking trail that would follow the crest of the escarpment through the county. Unfortunately, as development capitalizes on the escarpment and the vistas that can be seen from it, fewer and fewer of these overlooks will be available to the public in the future.

One of the many important geological features is the drumlin field lying between Sister Bay and Rowley Bay. The old lighthouse sites, the Mink River estuary, Ridges Sanctuary at Baileys Harbor, and the Jackson Harbor Ridges on Washington Island contain extremely important historical and botanical treasures that need ultra-special treatment. The importance of the naturally occurring endangered and threatened plants in Door County has been underestimated. Far too much destruction of plant communities — some of them rare — occurs on a daily basis as development grows at an alarming pace.

Wildflowers and weeds turn a Door County meadow into a summer palette. Photo by J. Duain Moore

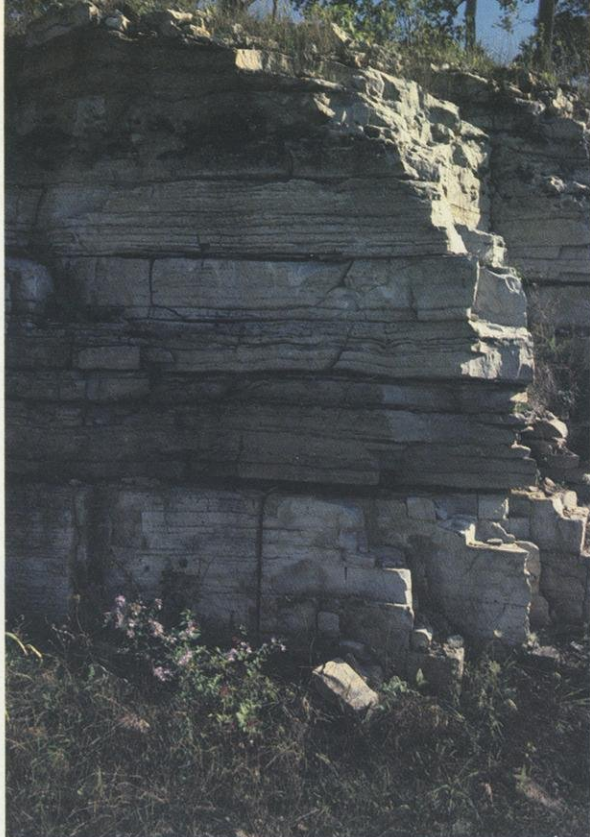
**Left inset:** Insectivorous pitcher plants grow in bogs. Photo by J. Duain Moore

**Right inset:** Wild roses survive in the harsh environment of the Lake Michigan dunes. Photo by Dave Crehore

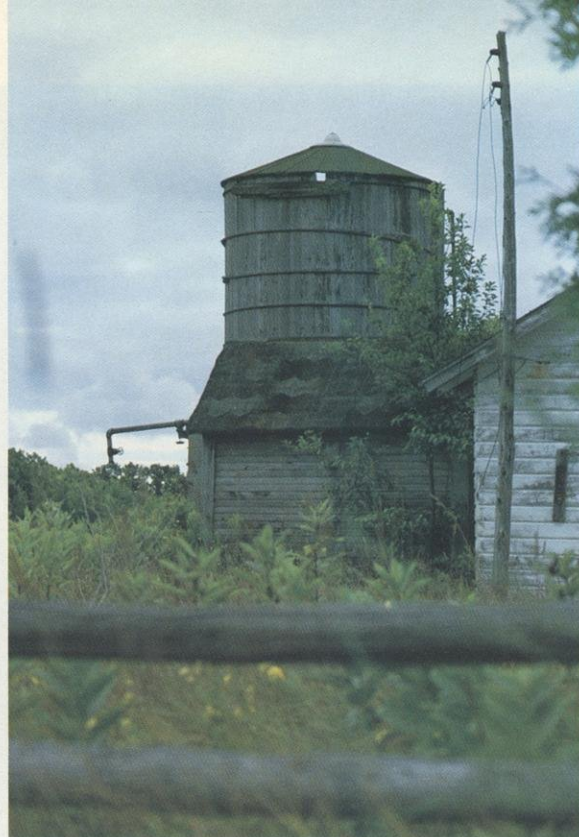
A 1978 study turned up an interesting fact: there are about 28,000 idle acres of land in Door County that in previous years had been farmed. Approximately half of that land was in the northern townships, including Baileys Harbor, Gibraltar, Liberty Grove and Washington. Surely this figure has increased substantially during the past eight years. Some of this land will be developed — but some of it should also be preserved.

Door County is famous for its natural beauty. Thousands of us seek it and appreciate it, and realize that it must be looked after carefully. Today, no one who is interested Door County for any reason can afford to take the beauty for granted. Our experience shows that the bluffs, shorelines, lakes, vistas, clean water, woodlands and sunny meadows will disappear or be changed beyond recognition unless enough people care.





Thin soils and creviced bedrock contribute to Door County's groundwater problems. Photo by Dave Crehore



Lead arsenate pesticides mixed in stations similar to this caused lead contamination in some areas of the county. Photo by Dean Tvedt

# Groundwater

Dave Crehore

## *Door County's "Built-On" Problem*

If you live in the middle-west, you can assume that there is plenty of water under the ground beneath your feet. Usually it's pure, drinkable and not too hard to get at. If you live in rural Wisconsin, your water comes from a well that taps abundant supplies stored in the rock and soil beneath us. Even if you live in a city, chances are that the water in your municipal system comes from a well. All told, more than 70% of Wisconsin residents get their drinking water from the ground. In most places, it's dependable and pure. But not everywhere!

Parts of Door County, as well as some other areas of Wisconsin with similar geology, have problems with groundwater that are made worse by the underground rock structure. This structure usually gets all the blame, but it is a natural environmental circumstance that cannot be changed. The problems are actually caused by the excessive and incompatible demands of the people who live above it.

Door County is underlain by a layer of limestone as much as 200 feet thick. It's visible on both sides of the county, forming the western bluffs along Green Bay and the shelving shoreline of the Lake Michigan coast. In northern Door County, soils atop this limestone layer are extremely thin and

rocky by Wisconsin standards, typically ranging from less than a foot to 10 or 15 feet deep. The layer is called the "Niagara limestone," or the "Niagara dolomite," because it is part of a great shield that extends to the east and actually forms the ledge of Niagara Falls. Dolomite is a particularly hard kind of limestone that consists both of calcium and magnesium carbonates.

Door County's limestone is a problem for two reasons: because it is crisscrossed with horizontal and vertical cracks, and because the soil layer above it is so thin. The multitudes of cracks hold a lot of groundwater and allow it to move freely and rapidly below the surface and the thin soil provides relatively little filtering or purifying action.

The effects of these two conditions are easy to predict. When water from precipitation or other sources enters the soil, it has only a short distance to go before it reaches the limestone. Once in the fractured, saturated limestone, it can move easily to other locations.

You have to imagine the groundwater working its way unseen through the soil and rock. In structures such as clay or sandstone, which have small openings between individual particles, groundwater



moves slowly — inches per day. But in fractured limestone it can move many feet or even yards per day, carrying contamination with it, from septic tanks to wells, for instance. Powered by gravity and precipitation, groundwater will move across property lines, village limits and town lines, taking with it whatever the porous soil and rock cannot remove.

So Door County has a built-in drinking water and waste disposal problem. In fact, the county is “built-on” the problem, which, strangely enough, is made worse by the Door County way of life.

A major part of Door County’s charm is that, north and south of Sturgeon Bay, its residents live either in rural settings or small villages. Rural dwellings have no access whatever to municipal services such as sewage treatment systems and public water supplies. Only three villages — Sister Bay, Fish Creek, and Forestville — have sewage systems and outside of Sturgeon Bay, there are only two municipal water supplies, at Sister Bay and Maplewood. Therefore, most rural and village residents depend on a private well for drinking water and a septic tank for human waste disposal. They have to rely on the limestone to produce drinking water and assimilate and dilute waste. And that, of course, is the crux of the problem.

### How It Works

Residential wells sunk in Door County’s fractured limestone usually produce abundant drinking water, but its quality can vary considerably from place to place and season to season. For example, spring and fall rains and spring snowmelt “recharge” groundwater, increasing both its flow and the concentration of silt, human waste, farm waste, and other potential contaminants in it. As



Septic and holding tanks must be pumped periodically. Wastes are then land-spread or trucked to sewage treatment plants. Photo by Dean Tvedt

A final, maddening element of Door County’s “built-on” problem is the unpredictable movement of groundwater through the limestone. Because no one can tell where all the major underground fractures are, or know their extent, it is impossible to predict whether a new well will produce acceptable water. A well that provides pure water in summer and winter may produce contaminated water in spring and fall, when groundwater flows increase. If a well becomes contaminated, there is no way to know if a replacement well will be any better. For the same reasons, it is very difficult to trace the source of groundwater contamination.

The only safe prediction is that these problems will tend to become worse and more frequent as the number of wells and septic tanks increases. By depending on the limestone groundwater to perform the incompatible functions of water supply and waste dilution, residents are betting on a real underground crap game.

---

***Built on a rock formation with very limited capacity to handle waste, the county must accept this geologic fact before it can plan a trouble-free future.***

---

some residents will tell you, “You can tell when it rains — the water in your well turns brown.”

Septic tanks for human waste disposal compound the problem. They are supposed to disperse the waste into the soil through drain tiles and in most places soil will do an adequate job of purifying the effluent from a household. But where there is only a thin, rocky layer of soil over porous bedrock, soil absorption of wastes does not work well. In some areas of northern Door County, many septic tanks are “failing” — waste from them can enter groundwater in a largely untreated condition.

Household wastes from septic tanks aren’t the only problem. In some areas, stored or spread cattle manure gets into the groundwater, and in fact, almost any contaminant, can find its way through the shallow soils. In 1984, lead was found in wells near sites where orchard pesticides containing lead were mixed 25 years before.

### What Can Be Done?

The important thing is to accept that Door County’s geological and soil conditions cannot be changed or “improved.” The only answers to the “built-on” problem lie in the ways county residents adapt to it.

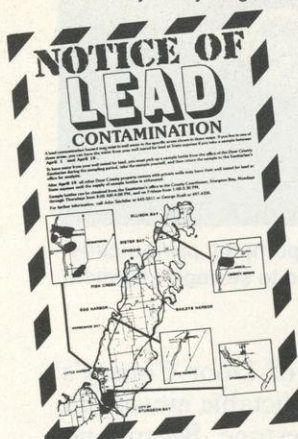
To make realistic progress, the county must experiment with various kinds of partial answers to protect the groundwater and its users from the worst abuses. Some steps of this kind have already been taken. For example:

Three villages have built sewer systems and sewage plants that collect the wastes, treat them, and discharge the effluent to surface waters. Two other villages are planning to build. These systems reduce risks of contamination within and near the villages.

Sturgeon Bay has both a sewage treatment system and a municipal water supply. However, a majority of the city’s municipal wells have become contaminated and are unusable.



In spring, the flow of groundwater through limestone bedrock can be rapid.  
Photo by Terry Hegemann



Department of Natural Resources posters encourage residents to test wells for lead contamination.

Agricultural wastes can be controlled, stored and used in ways that will prevent gross groundwater pollution. The development of practices to control agricultural pollution is one of the goals of a long-range watershed and groundwater protection plan now being worked on by county residents and DNR.

## The lead balloon

The annual spring display of cherry blossoms is one of Door County's best known attractions. Looking at the acres of pink, you'd find it hard to believe that a residue from cherry growing has ballooned out to threaten groundwater.

Up until about 1960, most cherry growers in Door County sprayed their trees with a pesticide compounded of lead arsenate and copper sulfate. The pesticide came in a powdered form that had to be mixed with water before it could be applied to the trees. Mixing of the powder and water was done at a still-undetermined number of "mixing stations" around the county. Usually, the mixture was stored in overhead tanks which were used to fill spray tanks mounted on trucks or pulled by tractors.

A lead contamination problem in Door County first came to the attention of DNR in 1984, when the agency learned about an abandoned mixing station near the intersection of County HH and Whitefish Bay Road. Surface soil tests at this site revealed the presence of lead, copper

and arsenic, the three poisonous elements in the pesticide. Tests of nearby wells turned up lead above the drinking water standard. This finding spurred a further DNR investigation to determine the number of similar abandoned facilities in the county and to check more private wells for lead contamination. Lead is a cumulative poison which affects the nervous system and can be particularly harmful to children.

So far, 38 suspect mixing station sites have been located and hundreds of nearby wells tested for lead. It was detected in about 32% of the 308 wells sampled with the 50 parts-per-billion drinking water standard exceeded at least once in eight of them. Known lead contamination is concentrated in three zones in the western, Bay-shore areas of the Towns of Sevastopol, Egg Harbor and Liberty Grove. But this does not mean that the entire townships are affected, or that areas outside these zones are unaffected. Uncontaminated wells have been found within the zones and contaminated groundwater has been found outside the zones.

The uncertainty is due to the thin soils and fractured limestone bed-

These partial solutions have, so far, prevented or staved off some problems. But there is no getting around the fact that as the population of Door County increases, conflicts between the incompatible demands on the groundwater resource will intensify. Real solutions will be political, technological and economic, not geological. Until they are found, county residents should keep in mind that the "built-on" groundwater problem is the most serious single factor limiting development.

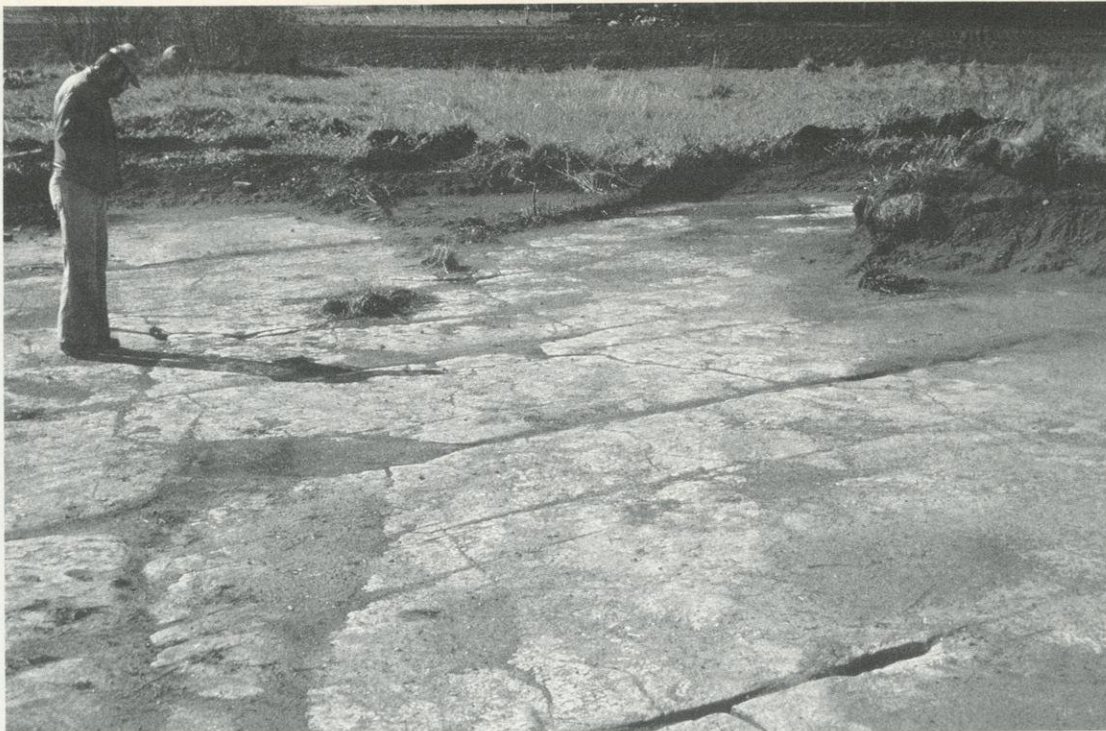
Regulations have been imposed to control the construction of new wells. At present, all new wells in Door County must be "cased" to depths ranging from 100 to 170 feet, depending on location. The casing ensures that shallow and possibly contaminated groundwater cannot enter the wells. At present, Door County is thinking about assuming responsibility for enforcement of the state well code, which has been administered by DNR.

In areas where septic tanks cannot work, holding tanks are now required. These are simply large storage tanks for wastes, which must be pumped out frequently. Wastes from the tanks are either spread on the land in suitable areas or trucked to sewage treatment plants. A holding tank that is intact and functioning properly will prevent escape of wastes to groundwater. The county ordinance that regulates the spreading of wastes pumped from septic and holding tanks was strengthened in 1985.

rock common in northern Door County. The soils do little to filter or hold back pollutants and once the pollutants enter the groundwater they can move rapidly through the horizontal and vertical crevices. But much depends on the degree to which the crevices are interconnected. Sometimes a well close to a source of contamination is not affected, while a more distant well is. In other situations, only one of two wells a short distance from each other is contaminated, because each draws water from separate, unconnected crevices. Thus it is difficult to determine the sources and extent of contamination.

In 1985, DNR publicized areas in which lead contamination was known or suspected and asked residents to collect well water samples for free analysis. This year, the agency is conducting and co-sponsoring several additional studies to locate more lead sources and susceptible geology. Until the studies are complete, DNR recommends that residents report additional suspected lead arsenate mixing sites for inspection and that homeowners within suspected contamination zones have their wells tested for lead.





Vertical crevices in limestone allow surface water to enter groundwater easily. DNR Photo

## The Upper Door County Priority Watershed Project

With local people participating, a plan is forming that will help the county protect groundwater.

**Deana Hipke,**  
editorial intern

In response to increased concern about groundwater quality, in 1981 Door County requested that lands north of the Sturgeon Bay ship canal be selected as a priority watershed project under DNR's Nonpoint Source Water Pollution Abatement Program.

Due to the geologic peculiarities of a thin soil layer and fractured bedrock, groundwater quality problems appear more often in Door County than in any other part of the state. These problems are compounded by the fact that, during the past 20 years there has been a greater demand for both water supplies and wastewater disposal brought on by an increase in tourism and housing development. The number and types of possible pollutants are also on the rise. In addition to human and livestock wastes, fertilizers, pesticides, landfill drainage, and road salt runoff also threaten groundwater.

While the physical characteristics of Door County can hardly be altered, it is possible to change land use practices which contribute to groundwater contamination. Since the Priority Watershed Project began in 1984, Door County has been the

target of intense scrutiny to determine pollution sources, methods of control, what changes and benefits will result, cost and staffing for the project, as well as the responsibility of the government agencies involved. Since different administrative units are responsible for different aspects of groundwater protection, all of these have to be effectively coordinated. So far, surveying and inventory of all water resources and nonprofit pollution sources such as farms, septic systems, landfill sites, and petroleum storage tanks have been undertaken. The Department of Natural Resources is doing the work with help from Door County, UW-Green Bay, the Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations and the State Geologic and Natural History Survey. Data collected are being analyzed for use in planning project goals.

If the watershed plan, which is scheduled for completion in midsummer, is finally approved by the county and DNR, steps will be taken to institute some specific practices and regulations to protect groundwater. Critical landowners will be contacted by county personnel and

notified of what they can do to help in the effort. The program is voluntary, and will operate on a cost share basis to aid and encourage installation of more effective practices for the control of seepage and runoff from livestock wastes and cropland chemicals. Farmers outside the Priority Watershed area, as well as other pollution sources that are not eligible for cost sharing with DNR under the nonpoint source program may be aided in cleanup efforts through other state and federal funds.

Locally, the county has begun to consider what steps it might initiate to protect groundwater. A special Water Quality Study Committee has recommended several points of action, including specific county ordinances which may be enacted to regulate septage disposal, evaluation of private sanitation systems, and construction of farm waste storage facilities. Cooperation between all agencies involved is necessary for the success of the project, but firm control on the part of Door County will be the key to ensuring clean water for residents and visitors in this beautiful and sensitive area.





*Retired Couple.*  
Pencil sketch by  
Artist Kurt Sroka,  
305 N. Washington,  
Elkorn, WI 53121

# Commercial Fishing

**The future is hopeful for a lake trout revival.**

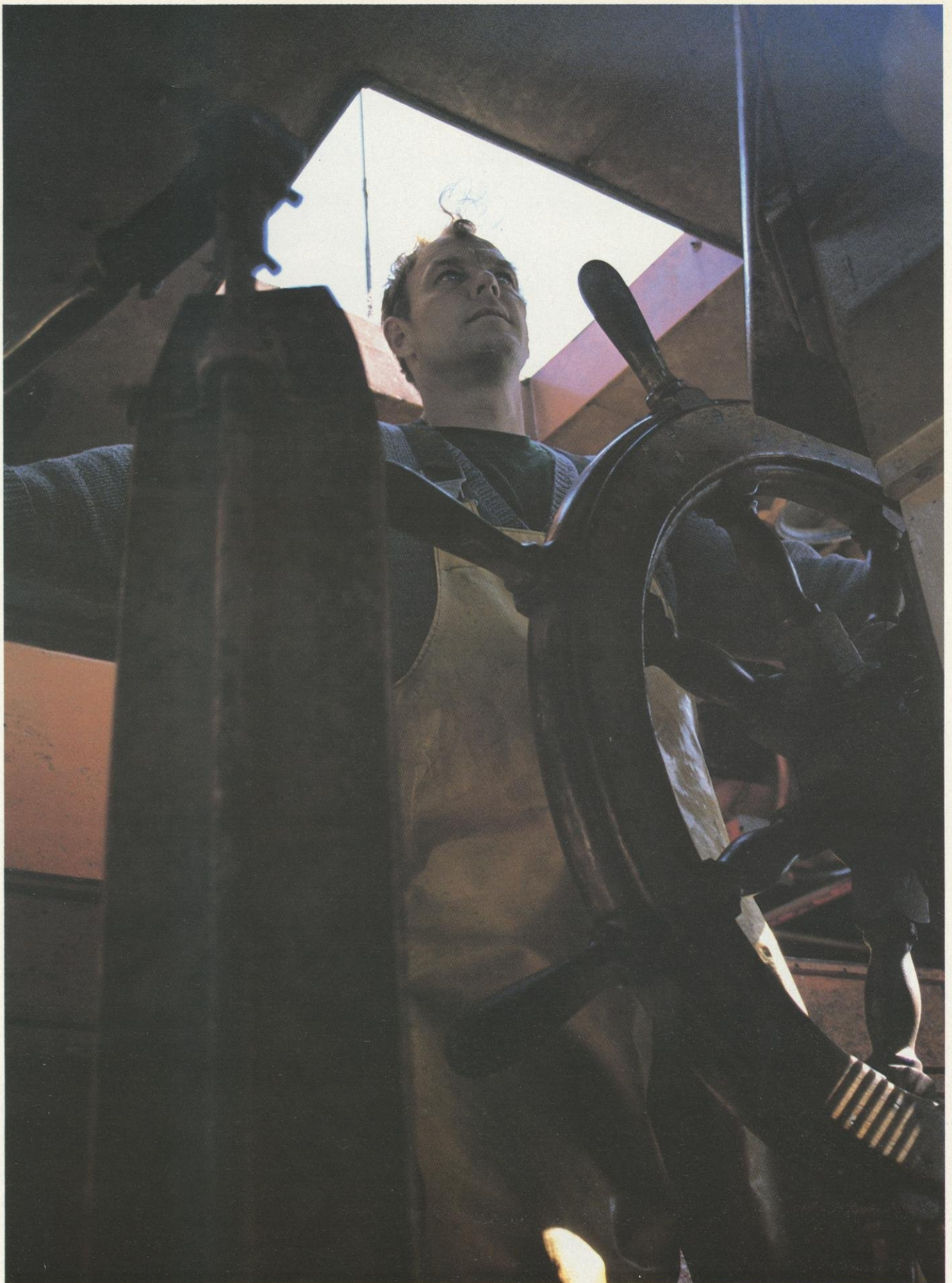
**John Spindler, editorial intern**

Commercial fishing as a traditional way of life in Door County has left an indelible imprint on the peninsula's character. Several of the first towns were settled by fishing families who worked the waters of Lake Michigan and Green Bay for a livelihood. Many of their descendants are still in the business. Their equipment—boats, nets, drying racks, anchors, fish boxes and other gear remain a picturesque part of many village waterfronts. But commercial fishing has undergone drastic changes in the past several decades. Lake trout, once the mainstay

of the industry, became all but extinct in Lake Michigan by the mid 1950s, victims of the sea lamprey and overfishing. The invasion of alewives added to the problem while commercial stocks of whitefish and yellow perch also declined.

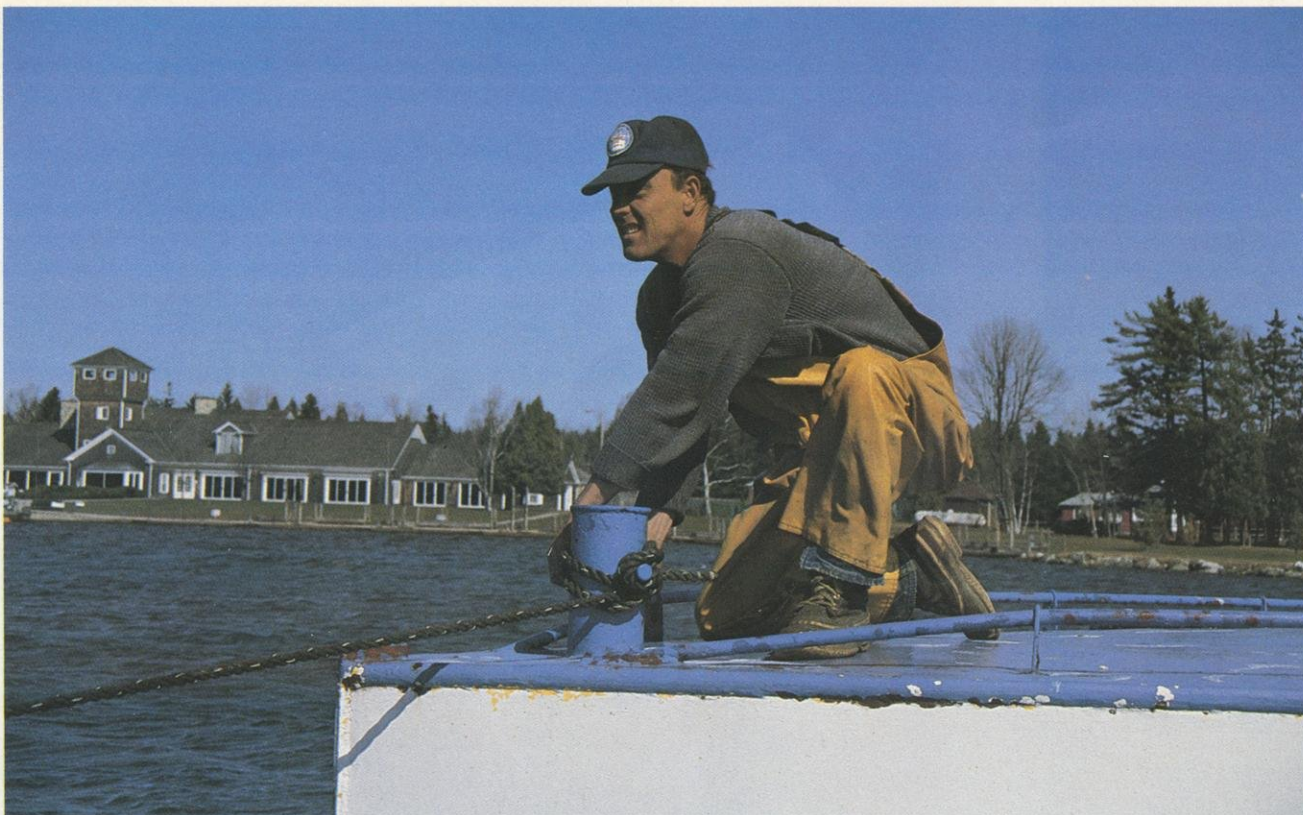
Sea lamprey predation was finally brought under control by cooperative federal-state treatment of streams where lamprey reproduce, but it came too late to save native lake trout. To get them back, and at the same time control the swarming population of alewives, the Department of Natural Resources



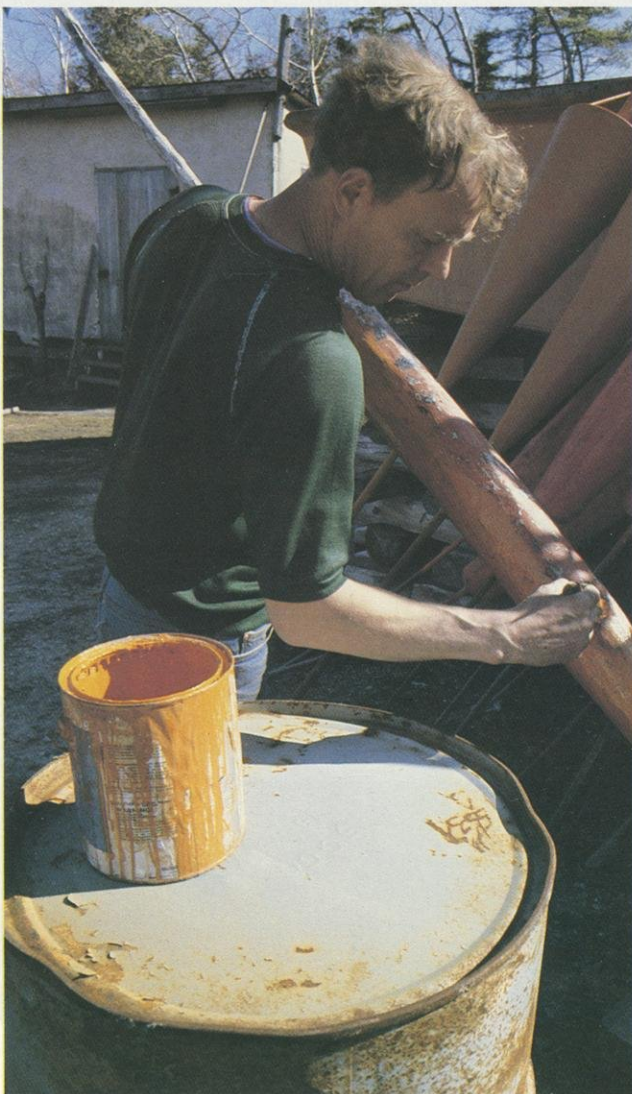


Commercial fisherman Jeff Hickey at the wheel of the fish tug "Southwester." Photo by Dave Crehore





The Hickey Brothers' boats are moored at Baileys Harbor.  
Photo by Dave Crehore



Much of a commercial fisherman's work is done ashore.  
Here Hickey paints net buoys for the 1986 season.  
Photo by Dave Crehore

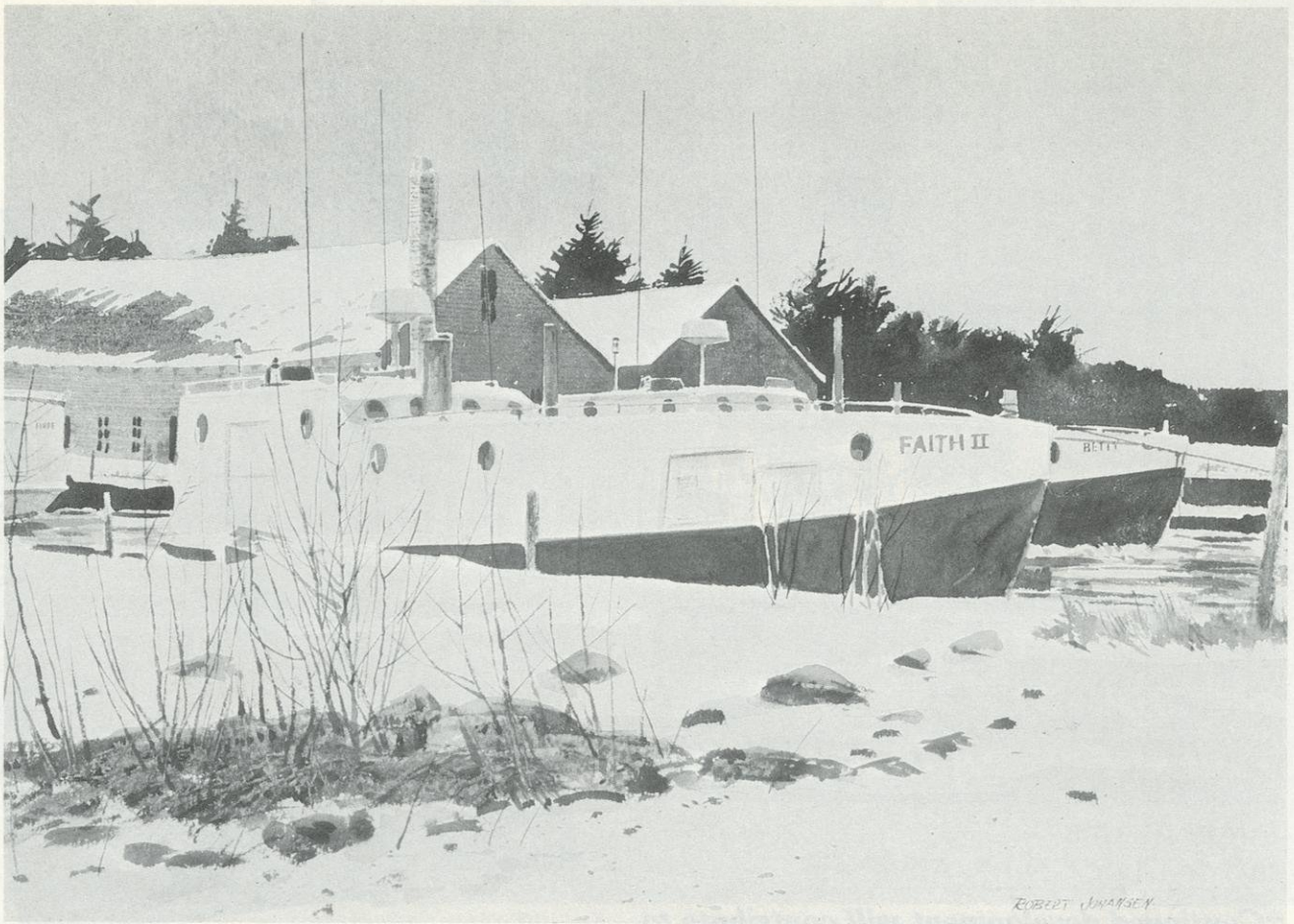
embarked on a management program aimed at restoring balance to Lake Michigan's fishery. It consists of stocking the lake with coho and chinook salmon to prey on the alewives and create a sport fishery, while at the same time stocking lake trout, but restricting the catch until this native fish is able to reproduce naturally. Under this management plan, commercial fishing for lake trout is prohibited.

Before setting up the plan, the department met with 21 different interest groups to gather their views and in 1983 a task force was established to make recommendations on how the program should be funded. Commercial fishermen had their say in both processes.

One of those who did was Dennis Hickey, a commercial fisherman from Baileys Harbor. "As a member of the task force, I think we worked long and hard on a plan that we thought would work out for everyone," said Hickey.

DNR's overall management policy aims to create a diverse, multi-species commercial fishery that will allow an optimum catch over a long period of time. Another goal is to reestablish a self-sustaining lake





Painting by artist Robert Johansen, 3017 Taylor Ave., Racine, WI 53405

trout population that will benefit all fishermen. For the time being, this has resulted in a complete ban on commercial lake trout fishing and a cutback in harvest by sport anglers. This has brought protests from both sides. Commercial fishermen want to keep the so-called "incidental" catch taken in nets while fishing for other species. And charter boat operators want the sport limit set higher than the proposed two fish per day. But DNR has hung tough on these restrictions — because the sport fishery has been taking too many potential spawners — and because commercial fishermen had also taken too many back when keeping the incidental catch was allowed. Some commercial fishermen say the ban on incidental catch means "dead or alive, over the side," and task force member Hickey is also critical of the ban, which he thinks is wasteful. In general, attitudes toward the department's fish management policies vary. "They mean well, but I think political pressures don't always allow them (DNR) to get the job done in a way that benefits the resource," Hickey said.

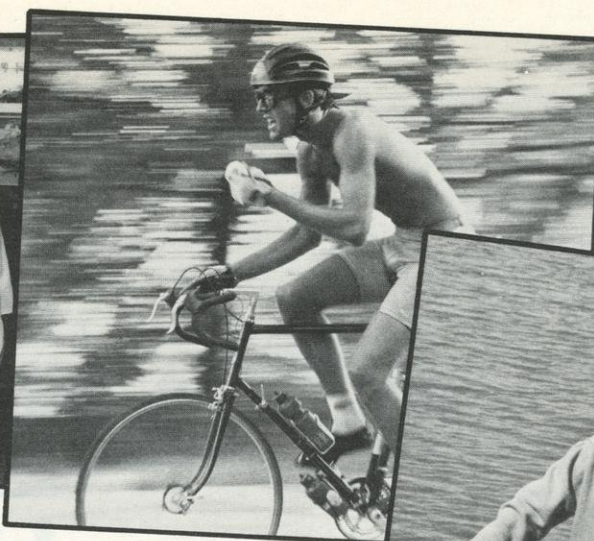
But Hickey has seen changes for the better. "In the last few years, DNR people at the field level have done a good job of dealing with commercial fishermen. They seem much more willing to work with us than a few years ago. I think we've really developed a good working relationship that has def-

initely been to the advantage of everyone." Neil Teskie, another commercial fishermen from Liberty Grove commented: "We fishermen know how important lake resources are. Most of us believe that DNR's policies are on the mark, in our best interest. There must be that balance: control and regulations so the fish population will not be destroyed. We fishermen cannot afford this destruction. It is too important to us. I think fishing in Door County is good and will continue to be good in the future and most of us will work with DNR to see that it stays that way."

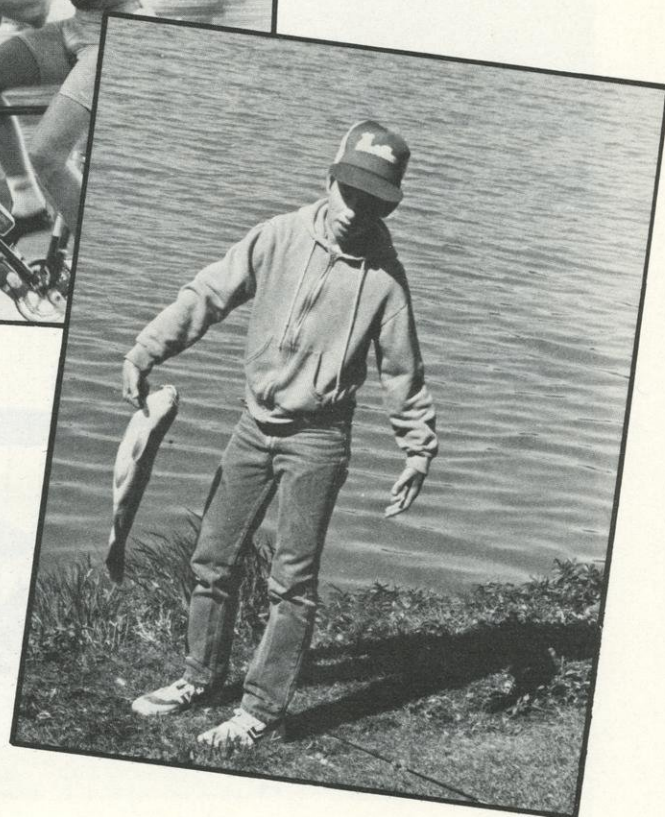
The commercial fishery harvested a record 1,080,500 pounds of whitefish from Lake Michigan during 1985. Plans for 1986 will increase both the commercial perch and chub quotas. The sport fishery, meantime, remains excellent.

But the outlook for lake trout is more conservative. The Department of Natural Resources says that long-lived fish like lake trout are particularly susceptible to overharvest and must be given good protection. Reestablishing a naturally-reproducing population is a long term process and restrictions on both sport and commercial fishing can be expected for years to come. New experiments on the spawning reefs are hopeful, but so far have produced no natural spawners. It may be a long time before they do.





Photos courtesy of the  
Door County Advocate



# Tourism:

*a source of  
income and worry  
for a developing county*

Linda Adams  
of The Door County Advocate

***“Continued development will contribute to the overall good of the county only if such factors as zoning and monitoring of sanitary requirements are carried out.”***

Tourism offers mixed blessings for those who reside in Door County. On the one hand are those residents who maintain that development, especially tourist development, must be curbed or the county will lose the unique physical characteristics that have earned it a prestigious reputation for beauty and charm.

On the other are the hundreds of resort, restaurant and gift shop owners who staunchly hold to the belief that they are entitled to earn a decent living in this county.

In recent years, a third point of view has begun to emerge as more and more residents weigh the two options and point to the fact that development can occur if it is carefully planned and monitored.

Continued development will contribute to the overall good of the county only if such factors as zoning and monitoring of sanitary requirements are carried out. Urban dwellers are beginning to talk about the need for farmland preservation, and farmers are becoming involved in such issues as groundwater preservation and the need to monitor farm runoff. A recent effort by the Door County Planning Department drew dozens of citizens to a three-part workshop to express their concerns, in hopes of establishing a county master plan.

## Extended Season a Factor

With more different things for tourists to do, it is not surprising that some businesses are noticing a drop in visitors and profits. Many blame adverse publicity about overcrowding for the slackening crowds. Others cite attitudes on the part of business owners, coupled with quality products, as factors accounting for a good season. But as one long-time proprietor put it, “We were so used to being 101% full in July and August that when we are only 99% full we think something is wrong.”

Another shop owner, in business for over a decade, says, “There are only so many ways you can cut the pie.”

Some owners theorize that visitors who are aware that July and August are usually busy tend to arrange their vacations so they can visit at other times of the year. And it stands to reason that with hundreds of new motel rooms and campsites built in the last three years, some of the more established businesses will have fewer full-occupancy days.

## Ten Years of Growth

Despite the ongoing controversy among residents, tourism in Door County continues to flourish. In 1985, a door-to-door survey of dozens of county restaurants, gift shops, art galleries and resorts revealed that the traditional prime time of July and August has fallen off while May through late





Visitors to Door County find a lot to see and do, but there's still enough peace and quiet to go around.

Photo courtesy of Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co.

October has expanded. Year-round businesses are even beginning to call middle-of-winter profits satisfying. Those suffering the most seem to be the smaller and strictly seasonal businesses that count on a big 10 to 12 week summer season to pay the bills the rest of the year. Also, older resorts are losing out to the bigger complexes which offer a wide variety of facilities such as pools, saunas, kitchenettes, lounges and even dining rooms.

Door County now offers visitors a choice of nearly 3,000 rooms in motels and cottages, and nearly 5,000 improved and unimproved campsites. More than 100 motels offer winter accommodations, compared with fewer than 20 that provided year-around lodging in the 1970's. A comparison of Chamber of Commerce statistics for 1975 and 1985 shows that bedroom accommodations have almost doubled in that decade.

Campground owners have been working diligently to improve their image and create an inviting atmosphere that blends with the pristine surroundings and at the same time offers campers the amenities they desire.

With hundreds of gift shops and galleries around the peninsula, consumers are more selective in spending their money and some established businesses are reporting profits dropping. However, ex-

perts who monitor tourism say that people are still coming to the Door peninsula in record numbers. Traditional tourist meccas such as Baileys Harbor, Fish Creek, Ephraim and Sister Bay are complaining of slower business, but Egg Harbor, Ellison Bay, Washington Island and Jacksonport report more visitors.

### **Sturgeon Bay Enters the Picture**

Sturgeon Bay, with its expanded advertising and new downtown Streetscape, appears to be capturing a larger percentage of tourists than before. Recent efforts of the Sturgeon Bay Area Information Center and Greater Sturgeon Bay, Inc., have helped promote the city as a good place for new business as well as an interesting place for tourists to visit. Sturgeon Bay now boasts two historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places. Going along with the historic renovation, the \$670,000 Streetscape project, paid for by downtown merchants, has given the city a turn-of-the-century atmosphere. A sign code has also helped spruce-up the city and a historic preservation ordinance is in the works. Other physical assets of the community are the \$280,000 Door County Historical Museum addition and the Miller Art Center expansion at the Door County Library.





The old boathouse at Ephraim now serves as a gallery for the Peninsula Arts Association.  
Photo courtesy of Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co.



Early October isn't too late for golf at the Maxwellton Braes course near Jacksonport.  
Photo by Dave Crehore



Ferries and tour boats take visitors to Washington and Rock islands. Photo courtesy of the Wisconsin Division of Tourism

Good marketing of the county has been partly responsible for the extended tourist season. People used to come for the hottest weather and the Peninsula Music Festival, but now there are festivities throughout the year to accommodate all kinds of interests. In fact, the annual New Year's Day parade in Egg Harbor and the Sister Bay winter festival in January draw large crowds from out of the county.

It's estimated that tourism, as a leading county industry, employs over half the working population of the peninsula. Less than a decade ago, the industry was limited to a June-September season, but the last six years have seen tourism expanding to year-around. More than 65,000 winter vacation guides were distributed by the Chamber of Commerce in 1985. National recognition of the peninsula as one of the top 10 cross-country ski areas in the nation





Boats from around the country are almost as common as out-of-state license plates. Photo courtesy of Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co.

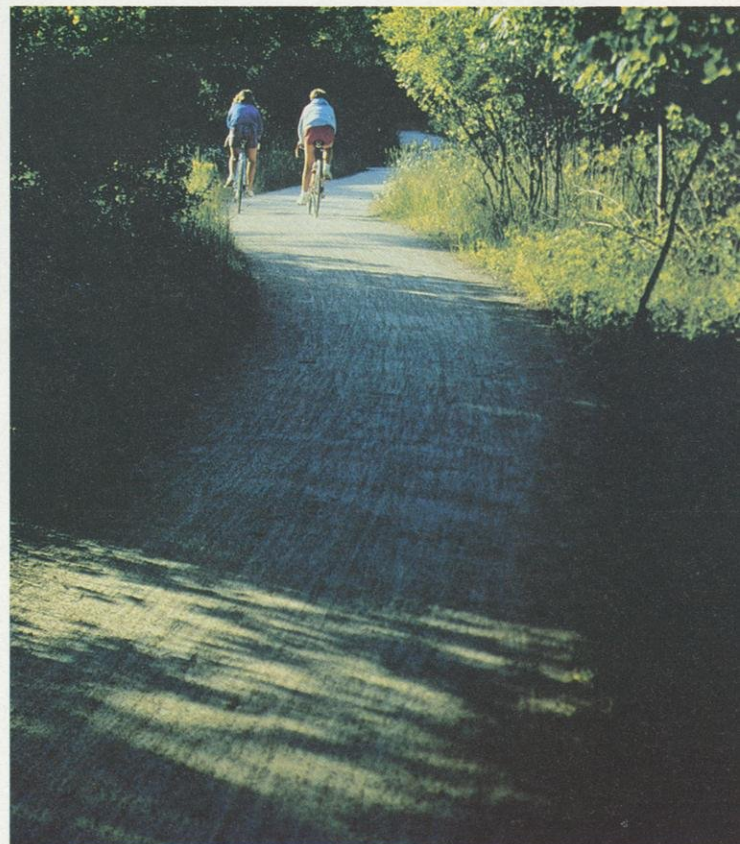


Fish boils featuring trout or whitefish are popular with residents and visitors alike. Photo courtesy of the Wisconsin Division of Tourism.

has also helped. Other rapidly expanding assets are ice fishing and boating.

Winter activities lead the way to the promotion of spring and the cherry and apple blossoms. As one businessman put it, "Spring is the most untapped resource in Door County." The Sister Bay Fall Festival and Colorama have sustained tourism into the late fall.

Another draw is the expansion of the arts in Door County. Birch Creek Music Center, the Peninsula Music Festival, the Peninsula Players and the Peninsula Art School are just a few of the programs that bring people to the area. The Clearing now offers classes in both summer and winter and exhibits at the Miller Art Center continue year around.



Bicycling on trails and side roads is a quiet way to see the county.

Photo courtesy of Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co.





Cross-country skiing has helped expand the Door County tourist season. DNR photo



## Preservation, Development and Service Are Concerns

Aware of the growing concern about overdevelopment, many in the county are joining forces to insure preservation of the county. Business associations are urging members to work toward common causes. With aggressive leadership, more and more villages are talking about municipal water treatment systems and stringent building ordinances. Many areas have already adopted county zoning, and pressure is on the towns that have not. The Chamber of Commerce has established an economic development committee to promote industry and manufacturing as well as tourism.

People from northern and southern Door, residents, proprietors and government officials — all have feelings about what tourism means to the peninsula. Many persons, both visitors and residents, have voiced complaints about high prices and poor service in restaurants and even some gift shops.

Quoting one businesswoman, "When are merchants going to change their attitude and recognize that the tourists and residents don't owe us a living? We have to provide a service first."

Real estate people, as well as the general public, are still trying to get a better picture of condominiums and the impact their development has had on tourism and the general economy. There are no figures on the number of condos rented out to summer visitors; in fact, there isn't a directory that lists all of the condominium projects in the county. Many involved in tourism believe that condos are drawing a large percentage of the affluent clientele who once stayed at lodges and resorts for a month or the entire summer.



Local festivities, such as Ellison Bay Days, attract tourists.  
Photo by Suzi Hass

## Fishing A Major Draw

Gary Nault, president of the Door County Great Lakes Sport Fishermen, believes that the tourism picture in Door County is not complete unless the impact of fishing is considered.

"The anglers who enter our area have a lot to do with the amount of people who enter our county each summer. Their effect on summer business is greatly noticed by a large share of the tourist-related businesses. Surely the sport and bait shops benefit directly and the hotels, motels, campgrounds, restaurants, taverns and grocery stores also benefit," Nault points out.

Nault says more than 1.5 million fishing licenses are sold annually in Wisconsin with about one-third purchased by out-of-staters. This means the economic impact of sport fishing in Wisconsin is high. Since Door County, which has more than 250 miles of shoreline, is rated one of the best fishing holes in the US, it gets a substantial share. Its 50-boat charter fleet and the salmon and lake trout they bring in are very important economic assets.

## Public and Private Sites Attract Campers

Camping, like fishing, is another big draw for Door County. The peninsula now has 5,000 campsites at the four state and 14 private campgrounds.

Em Montgomery, president of the Door County Campground Owners Association, says the peninsula's private campgrounds are known around the state for their rapport with state parks. Park personnel don't hesitate to recommend private campgrounds, she says. Last year the association paid for printing and distribution of 50,000 brochures promoting Door County camping. Statistics show that campers bring dollars into other areas of the economy as they purchase food, gas and entertainment.

Through the years, camping in Door County has changed from the early days of primitive sites and tenting to the more recent high priced motor homes with electric and water hook-ups. The season has also changed from summer-only to one that begins in early spring and continues into fall. Some campgrounds even offer winter sites for cross-country skiers.

Even as county residents debate the issue of overdevelopment, plans are on the drawing board for a \$4 million water recreation complex in Carlsville. The plan for the proposed Harbour Village would include expansion of a present campground to 500 sites and construction of a series of "water amenities" which would be open to the campground and general public.

It appears that with several hundred thousand visitors annually, Door County is on the map, and that it will stay there as long as the beauty and fragile resources of the peninsula can be properly managed and protected.





Condos, resorts and farms have to share the Door County landscape. Photo by Dean Tvedt

# What's our future?

*Editorial from the Door County Advocate, April 11, 1985*

We've always enjoyed speculating about the future, even though our crystal ball sometimes gets cloudy at election time. Futurism goes hand in hand with the liberal arts education we champion. Those with knowledge of the past and present are better equipped to predict and handle the future.

Some think Door County is shot already. If your comparison is with the 1930's, it is indeed different now. But we'll bet that, even then, there were people complaining that the county was getting overrun.

We have reached a critical point, but there are also more critical people, and they're making themselves heard. They aren't just "I have my place so close the bridge" people either. There are responsible citizens who realize that Door County is going to develop, but want it done in a manner that will preserve that quality that makes Door County special.

We'll never be woodsy-primitive again. On the other hand, thanks to farsighted people, we have pre-

served and are preserving large areas for plants and wildlife. The Ridges, the state parks, Mink River.

In areas where development is possible it is generally good quality. The entrepreneurs want to make a buck, sure, but the ones we know are sincerely interested in having their projects follow the flavor of Door County. Even if you don't believe that, it's in their self-interest to do so.

Zoning decisions and sanitary restrictions are putting the brakes on density and too much density has the most power to destroy the Door County mystique. It is possible to have great business without the feeling of being crowded, but it takes smart planning.

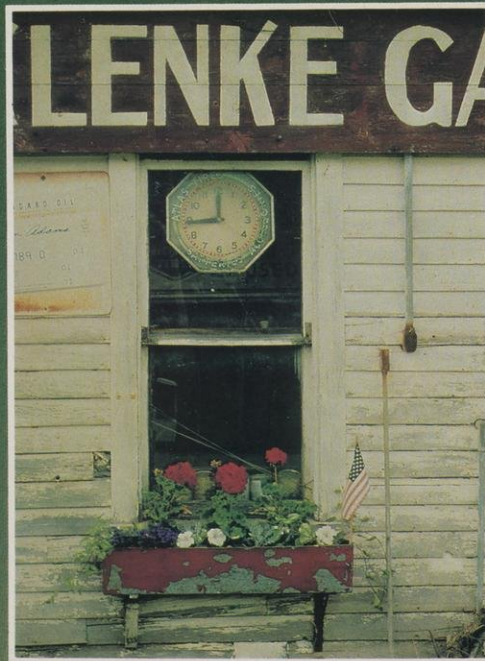
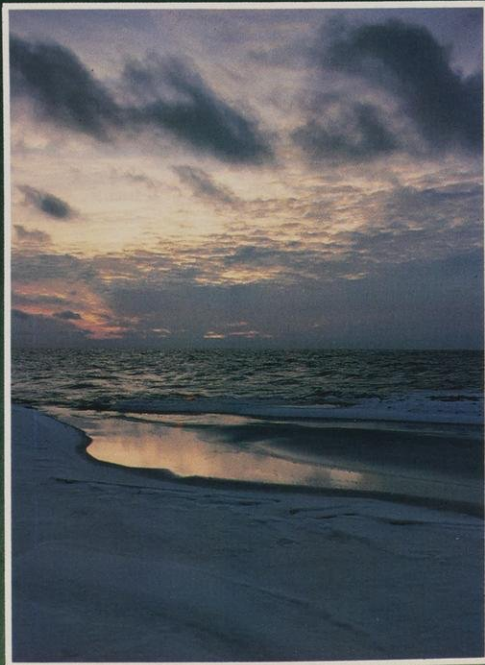
So what's the medium range outlook for Door County? Continued development in second homes. Clusters of shops. Greater base for support of the arts, which go hand in hand with tourism. Eventual good zoning of the whole county as more people realize it's aesthetically and financially smart to

adopt this protection. A southward drift in tourism. Look for Sturgeon Bay to emerge as more of a tourist town. The potential has been there for years but it's just beginning to be tapped. Over the long haul look for the boom to spread down the lake shore, even past Algoma.

Long before the Geographic article came out we had been editorializing that Door county was too desirable to remain a sleepy little tourist area. There are those who remember those sleepy days with fondness. If that's what they like, there are still places in Wisconsin that can accommodate them. But if they'll look closely they'll find there are still quiet hideaways right here. The development has been concentrated, which is good. Outside those clusters there are still places on Golden Pond and there always will be. Growth will continue but it doesn't have to spoil the county. Properly done, it can enhance the good life here.



# Door County USA!



1. 57 scene. Colin Duffy
2. Moravian Church at Eagle Harbor. Lloyd Olson
3. White Lace Inn at Sturgeon Bay. Tom Lemke, Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co.
4. Cave Point County Park. Roy Lukes
5. Typical rural scene. Tom Lemke, Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co.
6. Baileys Harbor beach. Roy Lukes
7. Sherwood Point Lighthouse. Tom Lemke, Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co.
8. December at Sugar Creek County Park. Dave Crehore
9. Klenke Garage at Ellison Bay. Tom Lemke, Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co.
10. Windsurfing at Eagle Bluff. John Lott
11. The celebrated cherry. Suzi Hass



# A Door County Guide

WISCONSIN  
NATURAL RESOURCES





# “” Conversations on Door County



Dave Crehore

Photo by Bob Queen

**M**y goal for this special issue was to let Door County people create much of the content. But reaching that goal wasn't easy. Most people are not writers, or at least think they aren't. To them, an invitation to write a 2,000-word essay is about as welcome as two weeks in the hospital.

I settled on an interview technique as a compromise. Interviews took less time, fostered free expression of ideas and gave an informal air of spoken, rather than written language.

The interviews were all conducted in the same general way. I sat with the people in their kitchens, studios or workshops and tape-recorded a one-hour conversation. The conversations were unstructured and free-flowing, but I did ask a few standard questions.

Back at the office, I transcribed the conversations onto a word processor, edited out repetitious material and digressions, divided the copy into logical paragraphs and added enough punctuation to make the meanings clear. Finally, I submitted a draft of the interview to each of the "authors" and incorporated their changes and corrections.

The selection of the interviewees was my own and largely subjective. I had known two of the people for years, but the rest were recent, and in some cases accidental, acquaintances. I tried to talk to those who represented various backgrounds and ways of life, but obviously could not do justice to every interest group or point of view.

As a result, the thoughts and feelings expressed in these interviews are not a scientific sampling of "Door County opinion," if there is such a thing, but I believe they are interesting because of their similarities as well as their differences. You'll note that I interviewed no "experts" in geology, environmental sciences, economics, or planning. Instead, I talked with people who were expert in Door County living, and in knowing their own minds.

So here are nine "Conversations on Door County." My thanks to the people who granted me the interviews, and gave generously of their time and thought.

*All photos in this section by Dave Crehore.*

## Map key

## Door County

Nature has been kind to Door County. Few places in Wisconsin have so much beauty and diversity packed into such small space. Miles of rocky shores and sandy beaches, towering cliffs, rolling hills clothed in flowering orchards, deep forests and mysterious swamps; Door County has been abundantly blessed.

Whether or not humankind has been good to Door County is a matter of perception. If you concentrate on what's left - the five state parks, the various private and public nature preserves, and the very real efforts of many landowners to protect natural beauty - you may decide that we have been caring and loving in our treatment of the peninsula. If you dwell on the groundwater problems, beach access, roadside advertising, real estate development and residential sprawl, you may feel less positively about the situation.

The fact remains that thousands of residents and visitors love and enjoy Door County. We may hope that whatever else changes, that fact won't.

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### ROBERT DE LA SALLE COUNTY PARK

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#### *See map number 1.*

One of Door County's earliest European visitors presumably came ashore near here in 1679. De La Salle was paddling up the shore of Lake Michigan when a storm forced his party to land. Short of food, they were helped, according to legend, by friendly Potawatomi Indians. This modest eight-acre park has picnic facilities and access to the beach.



# Gerhard Miller

**Considered the dean of Door County artists, Gerhard Miller has lived there all his life. Many of his watercolor and egg tempera paintings are of county landscapes and buildings. Miller and his wife Ruth live north of Sturgeon Bay.**

***"The county needs all the help it can get to preserve its delicate ecology as well as its quality of life and beauty."***

Phyllis Ingwersen, the wife of the artist James Ingwersen, could not have said it better when she described Door County as a "precious jewel". And like a precious jewel, it should be enjoyed, admired and protected for future generations.

As a life-long resident of the county, I wonder if we really are taking good care of the jewel, or if we are being careless. Will we wake up some day and find we have lost it forever?

Perhaps we should look around to see what has happened elsewhere and what might happen here. Take a look at what used to be lovely Lake Como in Italy, where it is now hard to find a square foot on which to build and where pollution is completely out of control. Take a look at Berchtesgaden in Germany, where every inch of available land is privately owned and one can only lease small plots on which to build.

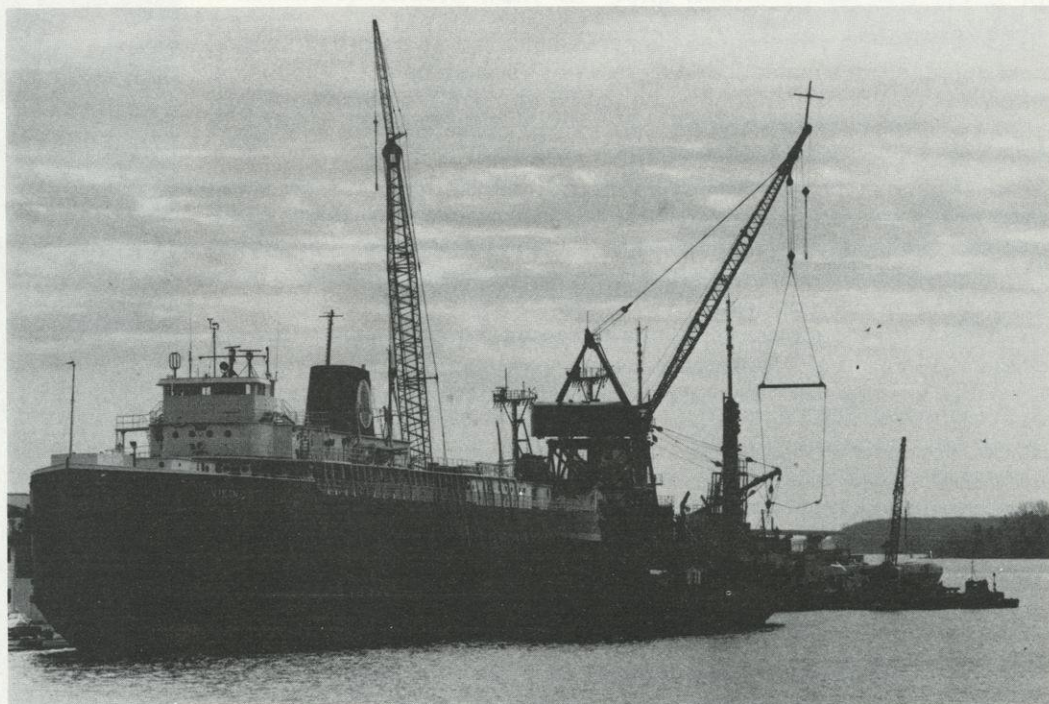
Or look closer to home, at Wisconsin Dells, which was dramatically beautiful until developers got control of it and made it a honky-tonk amusement park. Door County is as beautiful in its way as any of these, and we may be on our way to any or all of these problems. Is that what we want?

Up to this point, the county has not passed the point of no return. Basically, most of what has been built here is of good quality. We have not, thank goodness, gone "shacky". We have beautiful park areas, and one could list many things that have been done publicly and privately to enhance the quality of life in the area — things that will last. But since we have set our standards high, the dangers of overcrowding and pollution and increased commercialism are even greater. So we will all have to fight harder against any movement in the wrong direction.

Ephraim is trying to do a good job preserving its early identity by emphasizing its attractive white buildings and largely uncommercial character. It is also encouraging the spiritual and cultural values which marked the town's pioneer days. Sister Bay has dramatically enhanced the original charm of its Scandinavian heritage by importing authentic buildings, serving Scandinavian food in restaurants and offering Scandinavian merchandise in shops.

Sturgeon Bay, with its three large ship and boat-building companies, is carrying on the romance and excitement of its early days by continuing to build large commercial and military ships and magnificent yachts. As the center of county government, it has developed a Maritime Museum, the Door County Historical Museum, the Miller Art Center and the Door County Library with seven branch libraries.

Like several other artists, I am trying to document the early history of Door County pictorially. I am painting and drawing the things that belong to our



*"Sturgeon Bay is carrying on the romance and excitement of its early days by continuing to build ships and yachts."*



heritage — the old log houses, the stone and wood barns, the fishing villages and the towering veteran trees. I remember seeing many of these things as a boy and some of them are already gone forever.

We know we can't stop change and growth — both are inevitable. But we can control their direction if we try. We can try to have the county as a whole establish proper zoning laws and work with the Department of Natural Resources, despite the fact that both are bound, occasionally, to tread on toes. Both, inevitably, will interfere with private interests when those interests run counter to the general county good. But with the constantly increasing pressure of commercial interests from outside, the county needs all the help it can get to preserve its delicate ecology as well as its quality of life and beauty.

In thinking about the future, I want to think positively. For instance, many new condominiums have been built lately, but fortunately many of them are so hidden by trees they are inconspicuous. Also, many are of good quality, thereby attracting people who want good quality in their lives.

Billboards, unfortunately, are way out of control except in Sister Bay. There, the town took a strong stand years ago and the community's excellent growth since then has proved that billboards are completely unnecessary for healthy economic development. In fact, the presence of billboards in other parts of the county is even now leading the way in ruining the beauty that makes Door County so attractive to everyone.

So let us all get busy and do everything we can to preserve and protect the "precious jewel" we still have. Let us be sure that commercial interests from inside or outside the county do not steal it away from us and all future generations!



Gerhard Miller

### See map number 2.

The largest community in Door County has been a canoe portage, a fur trading post, and a sawmill town. Today it is a shipbuilding center. It hosted its first non-Indian visitor in 1674, when Father Marquette and his party spent two days portaging from the Bay to Lake Michigan. Three years later, Father Claude Allouez, another Jesuit and a missionary at DePere, gave it its name - "La Portage des Esturgeons." Periodically, until 1835, fur traders set up camp here to deal with the Indians, but little else happened until 1850, when the first real house was built. By 1857 there were three sawmills cutting local white pine into lumber for shipment to points south. Large-scale sawmilling ended in 1909 and during World War II the already important shipbuilding industry really came of age. Today, Bay Shipbuilding builds, modifies and repairs lake "boats" up to 1,000 feet long. Peterson Builders specializes in non-magnetic minesweepers for the Navy and such specialized craft as Alaska car ferries, tuna boats and oceanographic research vessels, while Palmer Johnson is a world leader in racing yachts. Sturgeon Bay also has its share of motels, resorts, restaurants and campgrounds, a marine museum, county historical museum, antique shops, arts and crafts galleries, fishing charters, marinas and the "Lollipop" excursion boat for tours around the Bay, the shipyards and the ship canal.

### WHITEFISH DUNES STATE PARK

#### See map number 3.

Sturgeon Bay 54235  
414/823-2400

### CAVE POINT

#### See map number 4.

The county park here is one of the best places to enjoy the action when Lake Michigan is flexing its muscles, and "the surf is up." Giant waves crash into caves underlying the limestone ledges, making the ground shake and causing what have been called "great



"Ephraim is emphasizing its attractive white buildings and encouraging the spiritual and cultural values which marked its pioneer days." The Pioneer Schoolhouse museum in Ephraim's "Moravia" district was built in 1869.



# Kenneth Byler

**Kenneth Byler, a native of Kansas, retired to Door County in 1968, after an academic career as a conductor and professor of violin at Kent State University, Kansas Wesleyan, and Lawrence University. Ken is active in the Peninsula Music Festival, still teaches privately and has taught a one-week chamber music course at The Clearing each summer for the last 15 years. His wife Barbara is an accomplished pianist and has appeared with Ken in solo and duo performances around the county. Ken and Barbara live north of Sister Bay.**

Originally, the first trip we made to Door County was to The Clearing. A group of musicians from Lawrence came up for a weekend of music and Sybil Shearer and her dance troupe from Chicago came up. We played and they danced, and it was a wonderful weekend. We returned to the Clearing frequently just to visit. Then, when the Peninsula Music Festivals started in 1953, the late Thor Johnson invited me to participate and I played in the festival orchestra from then until about five years ago. As my retirement from Lawrence approached, we decided this is where we wanted to retire, and so for several years we looked for property. We wound up being neighbors of several people with similar interests: Thor Johnson, John Krell of the Philadelphia Orchestra, Bob Marcellus, who was the principal clarinetist with the Cleveland Orchestra and now teaches at Northwestern, all on the same little road. And now Robert Browning, the concert pianist, has bought Thor Johnson's house. That's the way it started — the love affair began, and continued. It was the music that got it started, but it was that we loved the area, and that other people loved it well enough to build, that kept us.

There's a certain justification for the drawbridge mentality, that says now that I've got my place in Door County, close off the bridge at Sturgeon Bay. But it is much more difficult to find a place here today than it was when we built 18 years ago. There comes a point at which there's no more room, not just to build houses, but for adequate waste treatment. The condominiums are another example. They build on the land that one family used to live on and accomodate what? a hundred people? And that waste has to be hauled away and land spread. Just plain garbage is a problem. We have to take it clear over to the Going Garbage place, and from there it goes south. They don't want it there either.

You have to recognize the actual capacity. Even now, there are people who don't want to locate here because there are too many people. It's hard to say what will happen when we decide to sell this place — it will be harder to find good locations then, but the demand may be down. You've been through Fish Creek and Sister Bay in July and August, haven't you? Fun, isn't it?

The crowding of people affects the total pollution and also the quality of living. One reason we came here is to get away from the crowding of living in



*"Some of the things brought in from outside have become Door County traditions."*

*Byler conducts a string orchestra during chamber music week at The Clearing in Ellison Bay.*



cities. We came here from Appleton, which is not terribly crowded or metropolitan, but even so we like this better.

There are problems, and some controls and planning are necessary to solve them. We all believe in being free, but sometimes we don't recognize someone else's freedom. The planning has to be at all levels. If you listen only to the very local concerns, one community may start infringing on another's rights. It has to go beyond the village level, to the benefit of all of the neighbors — county, state, even national. We can't have complete anarchy. What happens to the Bay is just as important as what happens in my yard and my shore, and if I'm not careful about mine, it affects the rest. You need a broad outlook; at every level there has to be recognition of what's going on at the other levels.

But progressive changes are always slow, and usually late, like locking the barn door after the horse is stolen. You don't realize how bad the problem is until it's later than it should be.

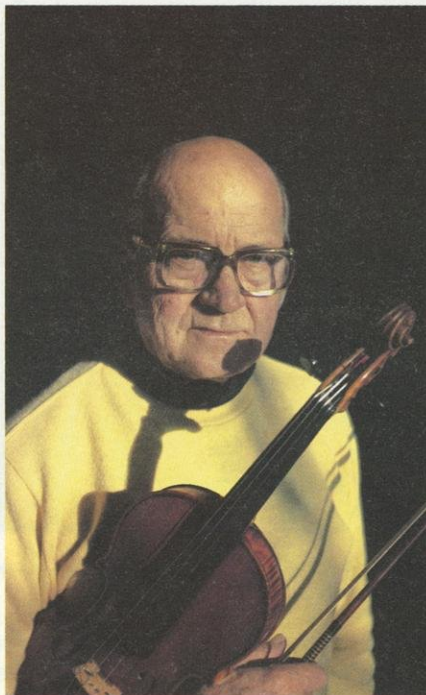
Many of the things that have been done in Door County have been done by outsiders, even people like me who have been associated with the county for 35 years. Unfortunately, there has been an "elitist" attitude on both sides — some of the people who have been here all their lives resent the newcomers and retirees, and on the other side, there are snobbish attitudes. I hope I'm not that way myself, but I know these feelings exist.

The Music Festival is an example. It's not cheap to hire a professional orchestra to come here and live for three weeks, paying the prices that are necessary to stay here. In order to give a concert, therefore, the price of tickets has to be high, and many local people can't afford it. But I'm sure the festival has had its effects on everybody, including the schools. The problem is how to make the festival more acceptable and available to everybody. I know local people who wouldn't miss going to the festival now, who didn't know anything about music before the festival came, and so it has served its purpose for them.

***"Progressive changes are always slow, and usually late, like locking the door after the horse is stolen. You don't realize how bad the problem is until it's later than it should be."***

Some of the things brought in from outside have become Door County traditions. For example, from the beginning of the Festival, a brass choir has played Moravian music on the lawn of the Moravian Church in Ephraim on Sunday mornings. And this sort of thing has improved the general life of the place.

We've seen tremendous change, and the thing that worries us is that change develops its own momentum. The changes are being made so fast, they occur without thought or plan. I know, it can't be the same, everything changes, but what is the benefit in the change? You should try to control it, just as you try to control the things in your own life. If you don't plan, you merely drift, and the same thing happens to an area. At least put on the brakes, don't go quite so fast, and make sure the reasons for the change have some substance and are not just for an easy buck.



*Kenneth Byler*

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## JACKSONPORT

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### ***See map number 5.***

Less oriented to tourism than other Door County villages, Jacksonport manages lots of atmosphere. In its early years, the 1860's, 70's and 80's, it was a logging and fishing community. By 1890, with an influx of German families, farming had become the economic mainstay. The German heritage is celebrated each spring with Maifest, or May Fest.

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## AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

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### ***See map number 6.***

Opened in 1922 by the University of Wisconsin to conduct research and provide technical help to fruit growers, the station maintains experimental orchards and gardens. It is near the spot where in 1862, Joseph Zettel, an immigrant from Switzerland, set out the peninsula's first orchard. Tart red cherries are still a major crop, as are apples and other fruit. There are large orchards throughout the county and most welcome visitors to enjoy the blossoms in May and the pick-your-own opportunities in July for cherries and later for apples, or just to buy fresh fruit.

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## OLD RANGELIGHT HOUSES

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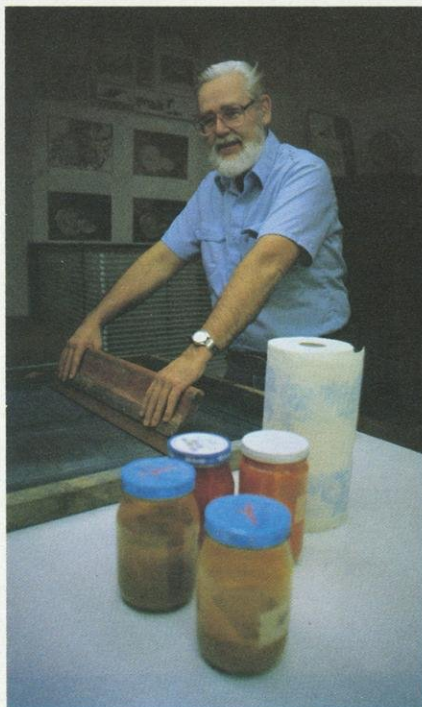
### ***See map number 7.***

Ships entering Baileys Harbor would maneuver until the higher light appeared directly over the lower light, which was just off the beach and 950 feet closer to the water. Following the line indicated by the two lights, the ships could stay in a safe channel. The lights were kerosene lanterns behind intensifying lenses and the houses date from about 1870. They stand on Ridges Sanctuary property; the larger one is now used by the resident naturalist as a home.



# Joe Cook

**Joe Cook and his wife Ruth moved to Door County in 1976 from the Chicago area, where he was an exhibit designer and director of a design department. Today, Cook still designs exhibits and other graphic art, but concentrates on making original serigraphic art prints such as the cover of this magazine. The Cooks live in a hand-built home and studio in the Town of Egg Harbor.**



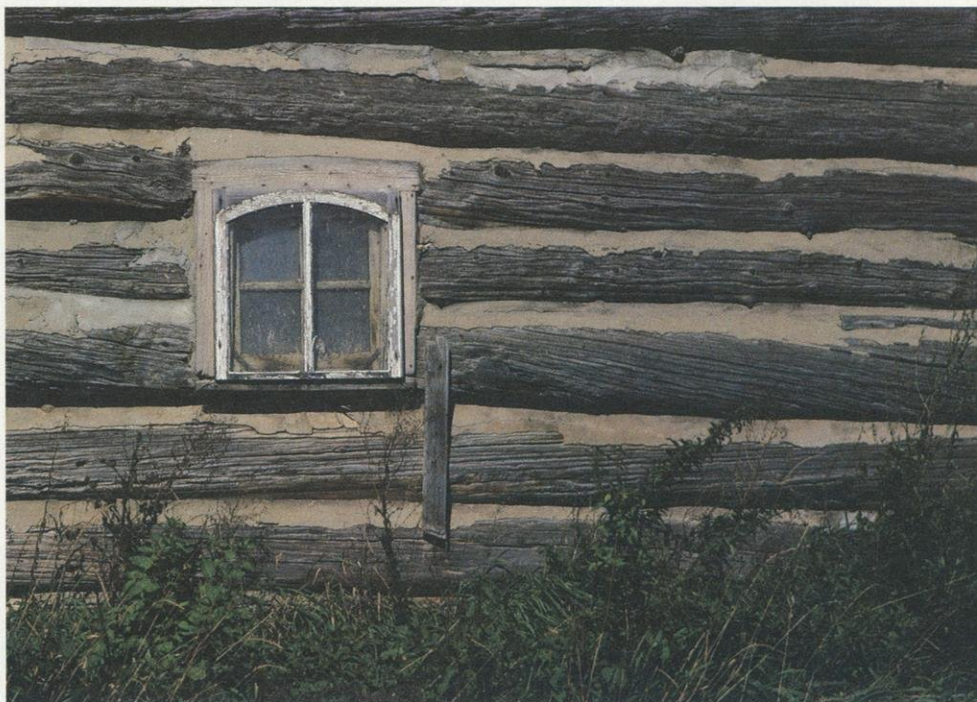
Joe Cook

***“You can say its not fair to set a limit, but I’m saying you have a limit whether you like it or not and that limit is the breakdown of the environment.”***

I came to Door County because I wanted to go in business for myself, and because we liked the place. From an artistic point of view, I like the fact that most of what the early settlers in this county built was based on what was available to them — the old barns, for instance, are made out of limestone and cedar. That makes them interesting historically and artistically. It gives them a fascinating quality, with visual expression, and I want to preserve that. I’ve taken pictures of a lot of buildings, many of them buildings that are no longer here and I like to use them in the paintings I make.

Farms create much of the visual beauty of the area. The farm areas are very attractive — they look like parks a good part of the year. When the alfalfa comes up you get one of the most beautiful greens you could ever imagine, and it’s lovely to put that into a painting. The family farms are part of the ambiance that makes Door county what it is. If you took away the cherry and apple orchards and the dairy farms, it would be a great loss. If we make this another suburbia, then there is no reason for the people who live in the suburbs of Chicago and Milwaukee to come up here. If they cannot get some of the rural feeling — of being closer to the realities of the earth — then why will they come?

Door County means something to people. When I first moved here and asked people where they came from, they never said Sister Bay or Sturgeon Bay, they said Door County. That’s because Door County is a kind of long, stretched-out town or village.



*“The old barns are made out of limestone and cedar. That makes them interesting historically and artistically.”*

It also means that we have five state parks, which is more than any other county in the US. It has almost 300 miles of shoreline, which is more than any other county. We have nature preserves, wildlife sanctuaries, botanical sanctuaries, and other natural habitats, which are being preserved as an inheritance for our children. Our ancestors handed this to us, a heritage in trust. We are to take care of it and hand it on to the next generation so they can have the benefits of these natural areas.

Another quality of Door County is that there is a sense of family for those of us who live here year-round. We all look out for one another. I can go down to the grocery store in Jacksonport and I can talk to Viola, who runs it. She’s a personal friend and we talk about all the things that are going on in town, just like we were around the old cracker barrel in the general store. I can’t do that in the suburbs of Chicago. They don’t know who I am. But when I go into Viola’s, I’m a neighbor, and she’s a neighbor. My wife calls up over at



Viola's place and says, can you have Wayne make up about 10 packages of hamburger for me. You couldn't do that in the suburbs and you wouldn't get hamburger as good as that, either. Butchered locally, really fresh. I never got hamburger that good when I lived in the suburbs of Chicago.

Now part of this family feeling is an old-boy network among the people who were born here and when it comes right down to it, if they have to decide who gets hired, they'll always give preference to an old-line, fifth-generation person. That's a fact. But they're very hospitable and if you stick around long enough, you can become part of the family. Door County people have a natural desire to assimilate others; the process takes about three or four years. Of course, if you make no effort to know the other people, then you probably won't be assimilated.

The biggest problem I see is that with intensive population growth, you get more problems with pollution. This is a very fragile environment, largely because of the limestone geology — pollution goes immediately into the groundwater system which spoils the wells. It would not take very long, with bad development and land use, to make it practically uninhabitable. But if we can control the land use and sanitation problems, then a great deal of development can take place without spoiling the livability of the area.

Of course, I think development is inevitable. We don't have any choice on that. As population increases and people want pieces of property, there is going to be development. So Door County ought to get together and determine which direction it wants to go and then set up regulations that will make it go in those directions. If we don't do that, we have only ourselves to blame if it ends up turning into suburbia.

You've got to have zoning. You've got to have objectives. But too much of the Door County administration is more concerned with real estate and development. They are members of real estate firms. If your only objective is to see how many bucks you can make out of Door County, then of course you're going to destroy it. If we can get some people who are not against good real estate development, but who take a longer look at the kind of life we want to have, then we can do a better job.

First of all you have to set out your goals for the area, the quality of life you'll accept. Then you have to determine the ability of this land to support the population. Determine a limit, and build your facilities to meet it. You have to choose whether to develop in a controlled way or an uncontrolled way. If you develop in an uncontrolled way, you won't be able to accommodate more than a 50% increase. But if you control it, you could triple the population.

You can say it's not fair to set a limit, but I'm saying you have a limit whether you like it or not, and that limit is the breakdown of the environment.

Every time you set up rules, it takes away some of an individual's right to do as he damn well pleases. But that's always been true; if you have a civilized society, no one is allowed to do exactly as he pleases — that's the essence of a civilized society.

There's nothing to stop us from being the first county that knowingly set up these kinds of rules. Systems don't solve problems, though; people solve problems. To the extent that you have good people, the systems will work effectively. If you don't have good people, then the system will be corrupted. Self-interest drives our society; regulation and cooperation keeps it from being unjust. We have to live by a code of law that limits some individualism. That's why there's antagonism to the Department of Natural Resources. DNR was set up to protect the people's environment and in the process it treads on individualistic toes. But it was necessary.

How do we get started? The first thing is that people who would like to preserve Door County have to run for office and people have to elect them. If we can't come to a common mind, then we'll have government by self-interest only. Either way, there will be one big royal battle up here.

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## BAILEYS HARBOR

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### *See map number 8.*

Named for a schooner captain who took refuge from a storm here in 1840, Baileys Harbor saw a succession of developers and entrepreneurs from 1849 to 1861, when a real village was established. It became the peninsula's most important shipping point for cordwood, ties and other wood products. Today, it is the major resort center on the Lake Michigan side of the peninsula. One of the major tourist facilities is the Baileys Harbor Yacht Club with elegant dining and accommodations. Others include Gordon Lodge on lovely North Bay, Maxwellton Braes with its golf course and several motels. Bjorkklunden Vig Sjon, "birch forest by the water," was once the summer estate of the Boynton family of Highland Park, Illinois. They built a Norwegian "stavkirke," or wooden chapel and decorated it with their own woodcarvings and murals. When they died, the property was given to Lawrence University, which uses it as a summertime retreat, conference center, and adult education facility. The stavkirke is open to the public.

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## THE RIDGES SANCTUARY

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### *See map number 9.*

Fifty years ago this lovely natural area almost became a trailer park, but preservationists prevailed and today it is an 800-acre preserve for rare native plants and wildlife. A series of 16 low ridges, former lake margins, gives the preserve its name. Between the ridges lie bogs. This diversity in landform results in a range of plant communities from open water to climax forest and is home for 25 kinds of orchids, trailing arbutus, fringed gentians, and Arctic primrose. Visitors on foot enjoy self-guided hikes, conducted tours and evening nature programs. There's a special trail for the visually handicapped and skiers are welcome in winter. Pets and picnics are prohibited and hikers are asked to stay on the trails and refrain from picking or digging plants. Admission is free, but donations for maintenance are accepted.



# Marty Gureski

**Marty Gureski, his wife Pat and son Marty, 11, operate a dairy farm on Sunny Slope Road in the Town of Egg Harbor.**

***"We're stewards of the land.  
We don't own this land.  
Nobody owns it.  
We're just here for  
a short time."***

I've lived here all my life. I was born in Sturgeon Bay in 1943, and my parents were both born in Door County. I can remember before we had electricity on this road. When I was in high school in the 1950's, we used to go to school one day and the next day we went and picked apples in the fall, just to help make ends meet on the farm. Or we'd make wood and sell it.

In the late '50's and early '60's I worked for one of the big orchards, mixing spray dope for speed sprayers out in the orchard. At that time, they were using a mixture called blue vitriol and arsenate of lead and there were times you could hardly crawl out of that shed, you were so darn sick from the smell of the spray dope. I believe that the people who worked with that stuff have shortened their lives. Plus there was spillage that got into the groundwater and we've been finding this out.

Since we've been here, things have changed — especially prices. Our health insurance premiums, for instance, have gone up from \$96 per month to \$368 per month in 10 years. But the price of milk hasn't gone up anything like that. A lot of people, myself included, have been making a go up here, but they are people who were out of debt before things really started getting tight. What is keeping a lot of guys going, is a couple of good years in the 70's that let them save a little money to see them through. If we had to start farming all over again, from scratch, there's no way we could do it.

The bedrock is the big problem — being so shallow. You've got to be careful what you do with the soil. When you work a field in the fall, you never work it so that the water can run down towards a ditch. If you do, there can be a terrific erosion problem.

And you have to be conservative with manure and field sprays. With the shallow soil, you don't put on five pounds of Atrazine per acre when the ground can only handle two.

As far as the limestone is concerned, it's nothing for a guy to go out and pick a hundred loads of stones a year in Door County. We've got plenty of rock crevices and sinkholes. Years ago, the old-timers didn't know what to do with them. They tried to fill them up with boulders or whatever they had. You hear some awful stories about other stuff that was fired in there — dead animals and what have you.

But you can tell in your well if it rains in Door County — last fall we had 4.2 inches of rain and we could tell it in our well. Your well water will discolor to a certain extent, because a foot of dirt is nothing to filter surface water. On the two farms we have, the topsoil depth varies from six inches to four feet. There are places where you can't set a plow down on the ground, because there isn't enough soil to make a furrow. You even have to hold a disc up out of the ground when you go over rock ledges. But anybody that's lived here has enough sense to be careful with the shallow soils. Those who don't are going to pay for it dearly. I think there should be a set of standards to go by to control erosion and so on.

You're not going to stop progress up here. There's good and there's bad progress, of course. But the ones that are really complaining against progress are not the people that have been residents all their lives. They are people who have moved in here over a period of years. And they almost give us the impression that nobody else should come in once they've bought theirs, like a little kid with a bag of candy. We've seen our taxes going up and up and as it stands right now in the Town of Egg Harbor, we get the full volume of tourist traffic going through, but they are all going to Fish Creek or Sister Bay. We have nothing to attract them but the winery in Carlsville. We have to get our tax base up — the Town of Egg Harbor can hardly pay to have a pothole fixed on the road.

There's bad points and good points to zoning, but I think the good points outweigh the bad. I can't see being able to do things that affect everybody without some sort of regulation. Even back as far as George Washington, we had laws and regulations, right? That's civilization.

We're stewards of the land, we don't own this land. Nobody owns it. We're just here for a short time and if you've got something to take care of, you take care of it. If you can't, then it's time to get rid of it, or look for help.

I think Door County's getting to the point where we do need some help. The Upper Door Watershed Project is supposed to help with some of that.



People aren't dumb — they know they have a problem, but things are so tight that a lot of farmers can't afford to put in manure storage. But manure in the groundwater affects everybody — it's a social problem. It's not just any one individual's problem, the way I look at it.

I don't think that farming will entirely be eliminated in Door County. We hope not. There are people who come up here just to look at farms. We live on a side road, but you wouldn't believe the number of people that come through on bicycles in the summertime. You can be out on a haywagon baling hay, and people stop and take pictures of you. I can have my collie dog on the wagon with me, and man, they'll just stop like flies to take pictures and watch. They want this sort of thing, because it's real. If we lose all our farms in Door County, there will be nothing to interest people — just a big suburb or a big city.

Farmers can't just farm until they're 65 and knock off. They don't have any retirement system. If things are tough, you can't put a dime away. In the early seventies we had a few good years, but since then things have been sliding downhill, and there's no way you can put any money away for retirement.

One fellow that just sold 100 acres told me, "I really don't have much choice but to sell it — I just can't keep up with it any more. If I don't sell it, I'm afraid my land valuation is going to go so high that I'll be taxed off of it anyhow." And if you can't keep up your taxes you're in trouble, right?

What's my 11-year-old kid going to do five years from now if we don't have something else to help us out up here? We're going to be in trouble, and if we're in trouble, the whole country's in trouble. It's heading that way right now, just like a big snowball, picking up speed. It's happening faster than a lot of people realize. Let's put it like this: I don't think I'll be paying any income taxes this year. On what? When your bills are as high as what you made, you got no taxes.

Like the old joke: They asked a farmer what he would do with a million dollars, and he said, "I'll farm until I'm broke." But it's not a joke any more.

Door County is a nice place, but still it's behind the times, actually, and we're going to have to have progress, one way or the other. We're just doing what we have to do to try to make a living up here, whether it's a snack stand to sell candy bars and trinkets, or milking cows. These people that have lived up here are survivors. They won't back down. You just have to get them to cooperate. Whatever they believe in, they'll back it to the limit.

What would cause development to peak and level off? Well, it would be the environment and too many people per square foot. The topsoil is thin and you have to do something with the waste. This bedrock cannot handle it all and people from out of town are going to see this. I think we're just riding on a high tide right now. It's starting down already with the condominiums — they're coming down in price. People want to get away — they don't want to pile on top of somebody else.

Something will fail. They've got too many wells with lead and other pollution in them now. And that scares me — I've got to drink this water all year long.



Marty Gureski

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## CANA ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE

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**See map number 10.**

A lard-oil lamp was the original light source when this 88-foot structure went up in 1869. The tiny island on which it stands is reached by a causeway, under shallow water most of the time but passable for Coast Guard vehicles. Since 1976, the lighthouse has been on the National Register of Historic Places.

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## MUD LAKE WILDLIFE AREA

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**See map number 11.**

Two miles north of Baileys Harbor, this 2,000-acre state-owned tract includes a lake, marsh and wooded lowlands, and is habitat for deer, waterfowl, ruffed grouse and small game. It is open for hunting, and a favorite of cross country skiers who enjoy seclusion and a chance to observe wildlife.

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## TOFT'S POINT

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**See map number 12.**

Private initiative and individual gumption protected this lovely natural area for 50 years. Emma Toft, born here in 1891, fulfilled her parents' dream by protecting more than 300 acres of pine, northern hardwoods, and conifer swamp. In 1968, she deeded the land to the Wisconsin Nature Conservancy, which in turn passed it to the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, as a sanctuary for both plants and animals. Together with The Ridges, DNR's Mud Lake Wildlife Area and additional acreage owned by the University on Lighthouse Point, this is a National Natural Landmark.

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## MINK RIVER

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**See map number 13.**

Preserving the Mink River estuary is a project of the Wisconsin Nature Conservancy, which has purchased more than 600 acres and is hoping to acquire several hundred more. The area is habitat for several rare dune and wetland plants, includes 12 different native plant communities, provides breeding grounds for fish and waterfowl, and has a rare "tidal effect" in which lake water actually flows upstream several times a day.

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## NEWPORT STATE PARK

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**See map number 14.**

Ellison Bay 54210  
414/854-2500



# Donna Lash

**Donna Lash and her husband Dan moved to Door County in 1971 from Illinois. They operate a furniture building, repairing and refinishing business in the Town of Egg Harbor, and have two sons, Jim, 15, and John, 14. Mrs. Lash has been active in the Door County ad hoc water quality advisory committee, and is a vice-president of Concerned Citizens for Egg Harbor.**

Don and I came to Door County in 1971 and started out as dairy farmers for about seven years. Then we travelled for a couple of years, and for the last five or six years have run a furniture shop. We have two boys in the Sevastopol School, in the eighth and tenth grades. We came here from Glenview, Illinois, where we both taught school. But we decided we wanted to raise a family in the country, not in a suburban area.

In the beginning, we didn't know very much about farming. I didn't know which end of the cow to start on. NWTI's farm school helped a lot — it was a fantastic program, and it helped us get known in the community. We started



*Donna Lash*



*"I like the fact that Door County has seasons — I look out my windows, and every one is a picture postcard."*



with a herd with very good genetics and it became one of the top herds in the county. But to farm all of your life you have to be born to it, I guess. The routine of taking care of those cows every twelve hours was something we could handle and enjoy, but we also enjoyed other things and didn't want to be a slave to the dairy farm. And we could see that the economics weren't there — we really weren't getting anywhere. So we sold the farm and started this business.

An important appeal of Door County was the water. Dan is a sailor — he has sailed since he could walk and had a boat early in his boyhood that he would sail out of Waukegan. I like the fact that Door County has seasons — the excitement of being busy in the summer, and the quiet of the winter, even though the routine of work goes on. And there's the natural beauty. I look out my windows and every one is a picture postcard. It's a very peaceful, unsophisticated way of living.

What I don't like is that people don't seem to have enough respect for the area and that it is being ripped off by people who come here to make money rather than for the inner experience of Door County. The county is magic to a lot of people and I get angry at those who are here only to rip it off.

There have been good changes and bad changes. We've seen a gradual improvement in the school system, which was a real concern of mine when we came here. We've also seen a tremendous rise in real estate values, in the '70s especially. When we came here in '71, we bought an 80-acre farm, barn and home for \$15,500. We're still reeling from the sudden increases in property value. The spin-offs of that escalation have come too fast to be absorbed into our political process and our culture. It's been good for some of us and has warped others. And with it has come all the building and greater numbers of people.

But it also seems that some people are taking more responsibility for civic affairs and the environment, although it's not universal. I was heartened the other day when a septic hauler got fined — I'm sorry for him, but I'm glad for the enforcement. I also think I see a strengthening of the county's sense of leadership. The county needs to assert itself and is showing some signs of this, although it has to foster shared authority with the towns. There has to be better communication between the county and town officials. For instance, some town officials resist zoning because "the county will be telling us what to do." But if they could see it as a shared responsibility, it might go better.

We've got to understand that zoning can do far more than just limit the eventual sale value of land, which is what everyone is afraid of. With zoning comes planning, which is the real benefit of zoning. Door County hasn't got a vision yet of what its future will be. There's no consensus or plan and we only see the repressive part of zoning. But with planning there are so many other benefits that offset the sacrifices that zoning demands.

For instance, if by public agreement we cluster compatible uses, then we can render the services that these land uses need much more efficiently. In a farmland area, it makes no sense to scatter non-farm uses throughout it, because the services then have to be scattered as well. That's a merit of zoning — services can be delivered efficiently and at lower cost. In the Town of Egg Harbor, it's not reasonable, with our geography, to put sewer lines everywhere. But maybe we should group dense uses so that there could be one place where economic development could be concentrated, instead of scattering them around with no plan. With strict zoning, perhaps people won't always be able to sell their land for mega-bucks, but they won't be taxed to death either, because they won't have to support inefficient services. Those are hidden costs of development that we all have to bear.

Zoning can also guarantee the peace and quiet that people came for in the first place. It can guarantee that there isn't going to be a gravel pit or a condominium or some other surprise next door. They get that security and lower taxes. But if they want, they can also move on to other real estate that might have a greater chance of appreciation.

We have to realize that land use restrictions will enhance land values to a reasonable extent. From a short-term view it may limit them, but in the long run it will enhance them. The developers know that already. They fight zoning restrictions here in Door County, but as soon as they have created their subdivisions or condominium units they turn right around and impose land use restrictions on their buyers, because they know those restrictions will protect their land values.

*Continued page 36*

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## DEATH'S DOOR

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### *See map number 15.*

The combined effects of wind, current, shoals, and rocky shores in the area between the peninsula and Washington Island took quite a toll of ships and boats in the days before diesel engines and navigational aids. The lighthouse keeper on Pilot Island recorded shipwrecks at the rate of two a week from 1872 to 1889! The "Door" in Door County had its origin here. Today, the carferries from Gills Rock and Northport make the trip to Washington Island in safety, but the name remains.

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## GILLS ROCK

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### *See map number 16.*

A tiny village, Gills Rock is the principal jumping-off point for carferry service to Washington Island. It sits on Hedgehog Harbor, which got its name when one of the first settlers had his boat chewed up by porcupines during the winter. Gills Rock has a nifty museum of marine artifacts, many of them recovered from local wrecks by divers. It's called the Door County Maritime Museum. During winter and stormy weather, the carferries dock at Northport, two miles east on Highway 42. Nearby, archeologists have uncovered evidence of Indian settlements from 1000 A.D. to historic times.

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## WASHINGTON ISLAND

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### *See map number 17.*

The schooner Washington stopped here in 1816, carrying troops to Green Bay and gave the island its name. Early settlers were mostly fishermen and farmers and included a colony of Icelanders. Today, there's little fishing, except for fun and only a few farms. Washington Island's beauty attracted visitors, even before ferry service began, and now summer homes and private cottages are everywhere. There are limited resort and campground facilities for overnight visitors. At Jackson Harbor there's a Fishing Museum on the old fish docks with artifacts of the industry and exhibits illustrating how herring were caught and processed. The Jacobsen Indian Museum at Little Lake has a fine collection of Potawatomi relics. Jackson Harbor is the starting point for the boat trip to Rock Island.



# Donna Lash

(continued)

***"Let's be assertive and not just react to what comes our way. Let's lead and get what we want. We have to quit being sheep and decide that we're the shepherds."***

I'd like to see some changes in attitude. We all know that we've got to get our act together here in Door County, but I don't see a lot of pressure by our elected officials to get the job done. The planning department is beginning to take a leadership role in developing a consensus on the future of Door County, but the elected officials should be encouraging these changes — I lay the responsibility at their feet.

But ultimately it's everyone's responsibility. We need an attitude change within each one of us, as keepers of Door County. We have to figure out by common agreement what our plan will be, and then seal that plan with zoning ordinances.

In Door County, we have such a great mixture of different kinds of people, not only in income, but in culture, family and value systems. That makes it hard to get a consensus here — maybe harder than in other places. There is a talent pool of retired people that is overlooked. We have the vision and perspective of people from outside that is not respected or sought out by those who have always lived here. These differences make a common agreement difficult.

In my case, for instance, I'm still an outsider because I wasn't born here. And we don't let women hold up their half of the sky in Door County. If a woman has an opinion that differs from the common view, it makes her a "nag." I take exception to it, but I have been called the "Egg Harbor nag." I laugh, but it's too bad that gender can also get in the way of a common understanding. It shouldn't matter if I'm an insider or an outsider, or whether I'm a woman or a man. If I have an opinion, it should be at least tolerated, if not welcomed, in the group process.

We still have to define what our goal should be as a county, let alone attain it. The eventual goal should center on preserving our natural beauty, because that is the magic that has brought most of us here. We have to do what we've done well in the past, which is to provide the visitor an inner experience of peace and quiet and beauty. The tourist business has profited from that in the past. But now we have new tourist businesses that aren't interested in following the natural beauty formula for success. They are offering thrill-type recreation. But I look at the fragility of Door County and say that we can't be all things to all people. So we should agree that our appeal is in the pastoral feeling, not in amusement park recreation. Let's use what's here naturally, and legally protect it with zoning covenants. We have to use what the land offers us.

Maybe there should be a density factor. The developers say that clustering is a good thing because they are putting the people in one place and not eating up all the open spaces. But the developers who do that must also accept the responsibility to protect those open spaces, so that they will remain open forever. If they put 293 units on 40 acres, that's fine with me, and it's efficient for the builder. But then the builder should be charged with the responsibility to own and pay the taxes on many surrounding acres that will never be developed. That way he will justify his gain on the cluster.

A mixed economy is really important. We rely on the tourism industry, but we need a broader base. Our reliance on tourism is a weakness. It is seasonal and offers few jobs that can actually support families.

There has to be a limit. We don't have to wait until we self-destruct, but without discipline we will. There are limits that we must acknowledge; there is a bottom to every cookie jar. We have to face limitation, and that means density quotas or some other kind of control.

It's up to us to decide, through the group process, where we want to go as a county. I see nothing wrong with making choices — right now we're making choices by default, because we're not making them consciously. Let's be assertive and not just react to what's coming our way. Let's lead and get what we want.

We also need to understand that it's OK to disagree. We don't threaten each other if we disagree — we need our differences. We need the wealth of everybody's opinion to get a good idea of where we want to go. That happens when individuals start going to local government meetings. We have to quit being sheep and decide that we're the shepherds. If democracy is going to work anywhere, it's going to work here. I'm determined that it will.

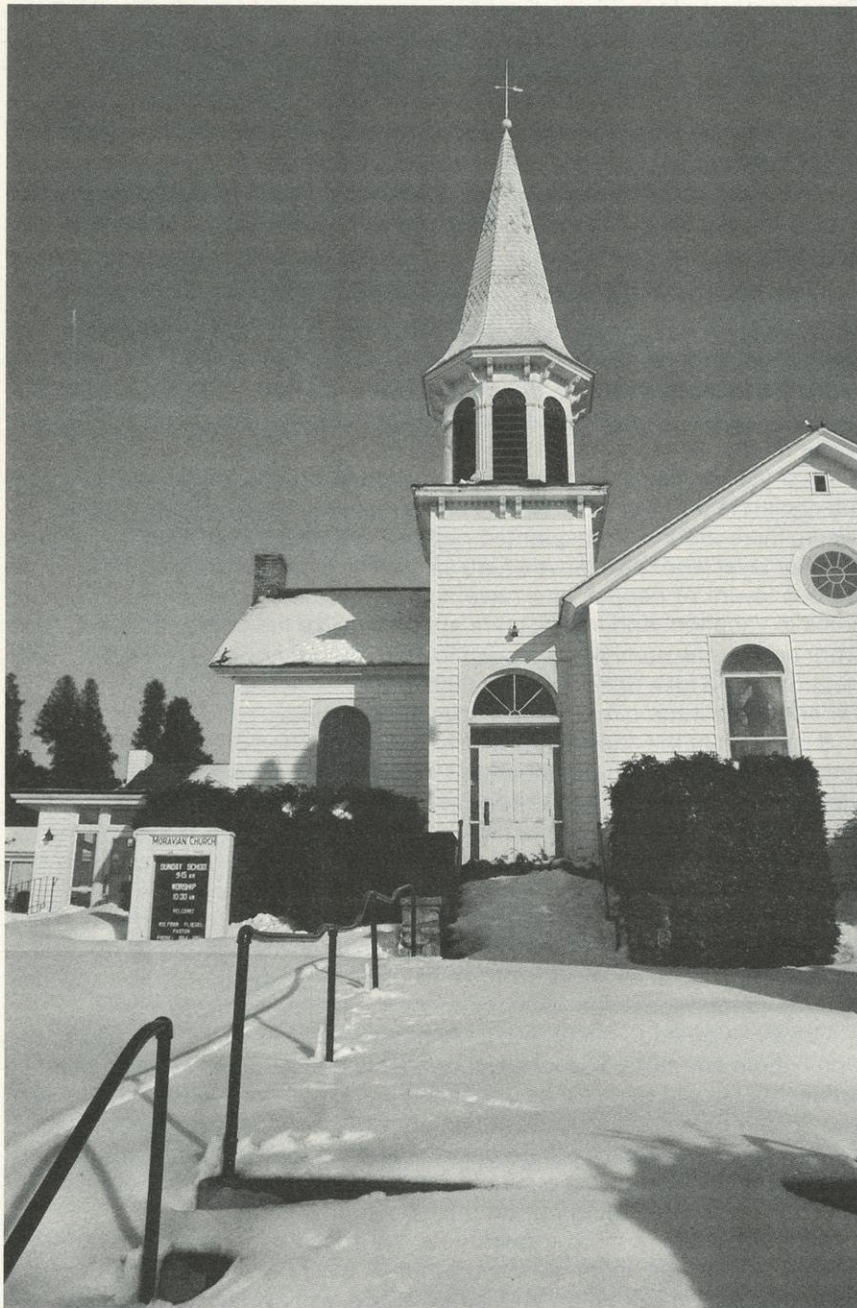
But the apathy of the individual voter has let the caliber of our leaders be less than what we need. We haven't demanded good leadership, and so in-



ept people are making decisions for us. Unqualified people, even ignorant people. People who lack the ability to respond to the changes that are coming so fast. That's the biggest problem.

Our leaders have to be master listeners. They have to hear what the people want. They don't have the right to be the boss. We don't need a "big daddy" — we need a master facilitator, a coordinator.

There are good things happening right now that are telling Door County that it can take control over events. For one thing, there is better enforcement of sanitary regulations. The county updated the old waste hauling and spreading ordinance, and that's very encouraging. In part, that was brought about by a significant process change, the appointment of the ad hoc water advisory committees. The process of asking the common residents what our priorities should be was something new. But it's got to come from us — it's got to come from the people. We have the power.



*"In Door County, we have such a great mixture of different kinds of people, not only in income, but in culture, family and value systems." The Moravian church in Ephraim is one of the county's most striking buildings.*

## ROCK ISLAND STATE PARK

### *See map number 18.*

This outermost bit of Door County has been an Indian settlement, perhaps a French fur trade outpost, a fishing village, a private estate and is now a state park. Archeologists have found evidence of hundreds of years of Indian occupation and some indications of a trading post during the 1670's. Fishermen came here in 1835, sharing the little island with a band of Chippewas, but both groups had moved away by about 1860. For 50 years, only the lighthouse keepers and their families lived on Rock Island. In 1910, Chester Thordarson, a wealthy Chicago inventor and manufacturer, bought it all, except the lighthouse. He developed about 30 acres including his own home, guest houses, a huge stone Great Hall with boat slips below and various outbuildings. Like the fishing village, most are gone, but the Great Hall still stands. In 1964, the island became a state park.

Washington Island 54246  
414/847-2235

## ELLISON BAY

### *See map number 19.*

This picturesque village is best known for The Clearing, an adult education vacation school founded in 1935 by the famous landscape designer Jens Jensen. Jensen came to Chicago from Denmark in the late 1800's. As an employee of the city park district, he designed Columbus Park and initiated the Cook County Forest Preserves and later became a successful landscape architect in private practice. In retirement, he established The Clearing as a place where visitors could enjoy the lovely setting, relax with nature and study the arts and humanities under distinguished university teachers. The Wisconsin Farm Bureau has operated The Clearing since Jensen's death in 1951, in his spirit and memory. Jensen believed that the restorative and inspirational powers of nature cleared the mind. From that belief came the name, The Clearing. Ellison Bay also has its share of amenities and facilities, including a number of outstanding artists' studios and galleries.



# John Lowry

**John and Peg Lowry moved to Door County in 1984 after many years of business experience in the county. Originally from Manitowoc, they now operate the Blue Dolphin House shop in Ephraim.**

***"It's a very fragile ecology up here—far more fragile than most of us realize. We constantly live on the edge of killing the goose that lays the golden eggs."***

My experience with Door County goes back to about 1948 when my parents started coming here from Manitowoc. We'd come and spend a week or two in a cottage. When I graduated from high school, I started a restaurant called "John's Galley" in Ephraim which I ran for eight years and then switched from the restaurant to a gift shop, which has been around for 18 years. So we're looking at 26 years of business experience here, full-time and part-time. I was in college and started teaching while I had the restaurant and both Peg and I continued teaching in Kohler after we had the gift shop. But as the season evolved up here and began expanding into fall three years ago, we hired someone to work weekdays and we worked weekends. Last year, we decided to move up here for good. When our present place came on the market, our dream of moving up here permanently came a lot closer to reality and we made the decision and moved. We are surviving — it's comfortable but no great shakes. If we'd both stayed in teaching we would probably be better off, but the advantages of running our own business and living here make up for it.

In the course of all this, I taught for 13 years and Peg taught for eight. Once I got out of teaching, about five years ago, we got involved in the Planning Committee for the Village of Ephraim, which I'm still on. And then I ran unopposed for the village board — the only way to run for public office, by the way — and in 1982 was appointed to the Governor's board of tourism. Most recently, I was appointed to the board of directors of the Chamber of Commerce.

Door County is where we've always wanted to live; there's a freshness and cleanness up here. The air is absolutely unbelievable. The water is the converse.

You live a hectic life four or five months out of the year, but for the rest of the time you get a little bit of solitude. There's solitude up here — you can always seek it out. It literally bothers me to go south of Sturgeon Bay. Just leaving bothers me, like leaving behind a part of you that you want to stay with. I had that feeling long before we moved up here — it was always very difficult to leave. There's some sort of pulling, an attraction. It's hard to put a name on it.

It's a friendly place, although there are probably six or seven strata within the society. You've got the really "native natives," who are few and far between, there are the "transplanted natives," who have lived here a long time, another layer who have moved here as retirees or to take jobs and then three or four layers of people who have summer homes, condominiums, or just come to vacation. And finally, there are people like the college students, who work here in the summer. I've been in Door County quite a while as a businessman, and take pride in the fact that I've been accepted somewhat — but I'm not in the inner circle, by any stretch of the imagination.

It seems that the "native natives" have relinquished control in the political arena. They've been outnumbered. On our Village Board, there is only one member who was born and raised here. The other four are either transplants like myself or people whose families lived somewhere else in the county.

The glaring liability is the danger we face from the overgrowth, overkill. The growth could get out of hand. It's a very fragile ecology up here — far more fragile than most of us realize. We constantly live on the edge of killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. I'm as guilty as the next person — we are developing a business and we have to draw more people, so we advertise and the more people you have the more fragile the ecosystem gets.

Growth is going to occur and it will offend a certain group of people, who won't come any more. The inherent danger is that if the growth occurs in the areas that I would perceive as unhealthy, we will offend a whole slew of people. Then a different kind of customer will fill the void and the facilities could change for the worse. But there are indications that the county and the municipalities are saying, just a minute, let's take a long look at what we're doing. The brakes are being put on a little, which is good.

Although there is more growth now, the regulations are much more restrictive. Years ago there were no controls, but now you have to consider water supply and sanitation and in our village, you also have to consider the parking, traffic congestion, and overall impact. Because of this, we may be dangerously close to eliminating the Ma and Pa operation — the one that's not well-heeled. That would cut out a lot of ingenious people, people who



persevere, and that's a thread that's run through this county for a long time.

Door County is experiencing the massing of society — it's a natural outgrowth of the advertising and publicity. But it's "de-massifying," too. People are beginning to deal with the environmental problems, for instance, on the local level. Doing it for themselves, rather than waiting for others. There's a sense that, here we are and we've got to survive and plan.

In this village, we're in the process of putting in a wastewater treatment system of some kind. I'm heading up the committee that's doing it and we know that we've got to do something — but we also see the other side of the coin. If we have a treatment system, the pressures for further development will increase. We've got to be able to control that.

There's a move toward planning development and protecting the environment, town by town, and at the county level. I think people in the decision-making positions have come to realize that it's necessary.

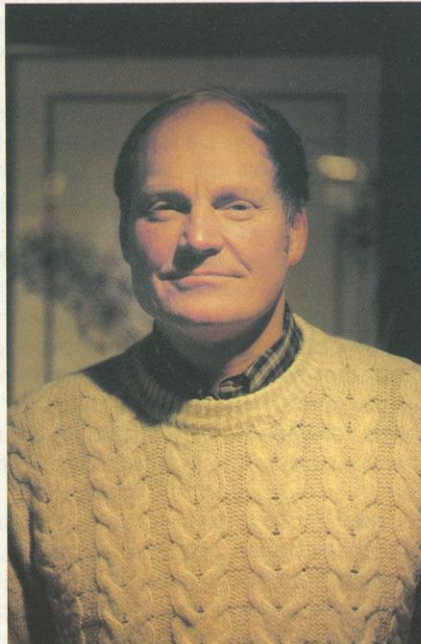
One thing we saw last summer — there were complaints that, to say it tactfully, we didn't see our regular type of vacationer here. There was a little shift, a little less spending. A lot of places were not as busy as they had been in years past. Lodging owners found people were bringing more food into their rooms and eating it there and restaurant people found their business down a little bit.

The more you advertise, the broader the base gets and the broader the base gets, the more different kinds of people you attract. If merchants in the county begin to notice that the dollars are not being generated by the people who are coming, what can they do? The option for some of them may be to lessen the quality of what they provide — or maybe other shops will come in and go to lesser quality. That may change the ball game up here considerably.

We already see a push for more things for the visitor to do. The traditional visitor found his own things to do — walk the Ridges, hike in the park, go to the beach, boat. He didn't expect an amusement center. Now, people ask at the desk in this shop, "What's there to do around here?" That's part of our society today: "I'm here — entertain me." That's not like the usual type of visitor and my feeling is that we need to attract that traditional visitor — they're what this place is all about.

You hear people worrying about Door County becoming like Wisconsin Dells. The Dells itself — the river — is an extremely beautiful area. What they've done to the community there, we wouldn't want happening here. We don't need the big plastic signs and big plastic figures and that sort of stuff. We have our amusement parks already and they fill a niche. But more of that, I'm not thrilled about, because I think it flies in the face of what Door County's really about.

The service industries up here would not survive without tourism. The tourist industry wouldn't survive without the natural beauty of the county. There are two extremes possible — too much development, or too much rejection of development. Both could kill the goose.



John Lowry

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## SISTER BAY

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### *See map number 20.*

Like most Door County communities, Sister Bay began as a woodcutting operation. A pier was built in 1870 and ships stopped to pick up wood for fuel and firewood to sell in the cities. As the trees were cut away, loggers turned to farming and fishing. Late in the 19th century, the first tourist lodge was opened. Today, Sister Bay has the antique shops, art studios, boat and bike rentals, motels, campgrounds and restaurants that Door County travelers look for. Perhaps the peninsula's best known and most photographed restaurant is here. Al Johnson's Swedish Restaurant was built in Norway and shipped here in pieces, log by log. During the summer, goats graze on its sod roof, while diners enjoy Swedish pancakes with lingonberries, fruit soup, and other Scandinavian specialties.

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## EPHRAIM

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### *See map number 21.*

Unlike other Door County villages, Ephraim began as a religious colony, not a woodcutting or fishing camp. In 1853, a group of Norwegians, members of the Moravian Church, came here from Green Bay. By 1857 they had a school, in 1858 a store and dock and in 1859 a church. Anderson Dock and Store, the Moravian Church, and the second schoolhouse — built in 1869 — still stand. The 1855 Goodletson Cabin is a museum and the parsonage, built in 1853 by colony founder, the Rev. Andrew Iverson, is a private home. Ephraim celebrates Midsummer Eve in the Norwegian style, with Fyr-Bal Festival each June, when great bonfires are lit along the shoreline. The community is a favorite with artists and craftspeople. In the center of town, Wilson's Restaurant and its soda fountain have been the traditional focus of community life and a meeting place for returning summer residents for some 80 years.



# Roy Lukes

**For 22 years, Roy Lukes has been the manager and naturalist at the Ridges Sanctuary, a private nature preserve north of Baileys Harbor. Roy and Charlotte Lukes live in the Town of Egg Harbor.**



*Roy Lukes*

***"I have a feeling that the population of Door County will keep growing and that the quality is going to go down."***

I have to think back to my introduction to Door County. It was common when I was a child in Kewaunee for people like my folks to go on Sunday afternoon picnics at Peninsula Park. If the weather was nice we would take little rides here and there and it left me with a beautiful impression of the county. That was 42 years ago, but I can remember it quite vividly. Then as a junior high kid, I worked for the Orange Crush Bottling Company in the summers as a pop-case carrier. One of my favorite pop routes was in Door County and I got to know many of the old-time tourist lodges that were still standing then.

As a student at the county college — Door-Kewaunee Normal in Algoma, where I went for my first two years — I had a progressive teacher, Ruth Stoneman, who was strong on getting to know the counties. With her, I took trips to learn Door County history and also made my first trip to this sanctuary. I look back on some beautiful memories and although I've seen some changes I don't like, some nice things have happened, too.

My experience here at the Ridges has shown me 22 years of change, particularly in the different kinds of people who come here. I have a feeling that the population of Door County will keep growing and that the quality is going to go down. Some people seem to be a little more coarse, they don't have the sensitivity, the gentle old-fashioned quality that I like. I think I've seen that change quite remarkably here. They're harder on the trails, they are noisier, they don't have the touch they used to.

For example, some people have ridden bikes here and left them piled everywhere down by the lower rangelight. Those people wanted to see something different, but they were so out of place it just hurt. They seem to be members of a growing crowd that constantly looks for activity. To those people from the cities, this is really the boonies. They're excited about it but don't know what to do with it. They seem to need to be in groups, with lots of noise and excitement. They aren't intentionally malicious, but they end up being so.

One of our plusses here is that we don't have a big, push-button nature center with places to keep lots of people confined. People can come here and within 15 or 20 minutes they're away from any car sounds and enjoying some solitude.

But people can change. Some of our most active volunteers and members are retirees from the big cities who have learned to enjoy nature profoundly and when I look at them I find it hard to believe that they lived in the cities most of their lives. The question is, how does the county accommodate both kinds of people?

In my own case, even though I was born into town life in Kewaunee, the more I have become educated, the more I appreciate the wilderness. To really enjoy the natural element requires some education and understanding of it.

At the peak of the sport-fishing season at Baileys Harbor, we have a hard time finding a place to park when we go to church because of all the boats and trailers. Once we counted them and there were 148. How would you limit these numbers beyond the village simply running out of space? When the town is full, they'll have to go somewhere else.

One change I find quite mind-boggling is the proliferation of shop after shop after shop. I put a lot of them into one category — the "ho-hum" gift shops. And so many people seem to think that this is Door County — the shops. It bugs me. What Door County really is, is the beautiful miles of shoreline, the rural areas that still remain, the limestone, the tradition and history. It's still a refuge from the cities.

I hear more and more people saying that they don't care to go here or there in the county because it isn't what it used to be. Some say they don't like to come back for vacations as much because it's getting too city-like and there are too many people. I don't know if it's self-limiting. At The Ridges we have a small parking lot and when it's full, people have to turn around and go away.

There are a great variety of places in the county — the crowded villages on one hand, but there are also any number of quiet places where we can go on field trips or hikes and be completely away from the crowds. It's two sides of a coin.

One of the changes I've written about a few times is the decline in the numbers of migratory waterfowl in the area between Moonlight Bay and Baileys Harbor. On spring weekends in the '60s you could see between one and two thousand, but today you don't see these buildups any more. I don't know



whether the trolling boats scare them off, or what. It could be a natural change, or it could be people.

Something I'm becoming more and more interested in is the offshore islands. I started banding gulls on them in 1962, but I'd like to get a better handle on nesting success and numbers. I'd like to see this information pulled together and continued year after year. Since waterfowl use essentially the same resources we do, it might be quite revealing to document the changes.

What I have personally done is an illustration. I lived in the old rangelight building on the sanctuary for 16 years and Charlotte for 10. When we began to feel the pressures of summer, people banging on the door and traffic going by, we decided we needed our own property. We wanted privacy, and to be a little closer to the earth, so we bought 22 acres near Egg Harbor.

We're surrounded by farmland, but we bought land that couldn't be farmed because it's too rough, too rocky, and is mainly wooded. What we were looking for is what a lot of people come here for — we disliked the racket of highways and the commotion of the villages, and we wanted the security of owning our own place. We like to grow our own food, heat our house with wood, and things like that.

On the other hand, we like life here so well because we're close to at least a taste of culture. We attend the concerts in the summer— —all that are available up here. We can go cross-country skiing in our back yard if we want and we spend a great deal of time in the state parks. It's possible to have quite a lot if you go and look for it, but it's not for the entire population, that's for sure.

We have set goals, and one of them is to manage our land quite carefully, so that when someone else eventually has it, it will be a lot better for wildlife as well as for people. We're trying to be useful in the total community, and at the same time do something good for the land we own.



*"There are a great variety of places in the county — quiet places where we can go on hikes and be completely away from the crowds."*

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## EAGLE BLUFF LIGHT

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**See map number 22.**

Built in 1868, restored and furnished by the Door County Historical Society, the keeper's house with its attached light tower is open to the public. The light itself operates automatically now. Eagle Bluff is part of Peninsula State Park.

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## PENINSULA STATE PARK

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**See map number 23.**

Fish Creek 54212  
414/868-3258

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## FISH CREEK

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**See map number 24.**

Asa Thorp built the first dock between Green Bay and Rock Island here in 1853 and by the late 1860's Fish Creek was the most important community in the county after Sturgeon Bay. Logging, cordwood, steamboat fuel and fishing, were the economic mainstays, but a small hotel built by Thorp was expanded by his son Edgar in 1886 to accommodate 125 guests and tourism began to grow. The second resort consisted of buildings brought across Green Bay from Marinette, where the Peshtigo Fire had resulted in a long depression. One of the buildings still stands as the Proud Mary Hotel.

A major attraction at Fish Creek is the Theater in a Garden, where the Peninsula Players, America's oldest professional resident summer stock company, presents a series of Broadway and off-Broadway plays and musicals each year. The Theater is just south of Fish Creek. North of town, at Gibraltar High School, the Peninsula Music Festival is held for two weeks each summer, with guest musicians, soloists and conductors from orchestras and conservatories all across the country.

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## CHAMBERS ISLAND

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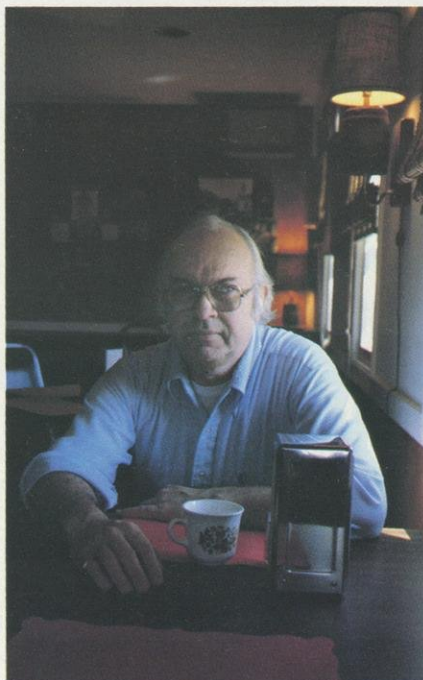
**See map number 25.**

Five miles off shore, Chambers Island is privately owned except for a 40-acre town park around the old lighthouse, which operated from 1868 to 1950. The island has seen a series of settlements, logging operations, real estate developments and even a shipyard. It was named for an army officer who passed it enroute from Fort Mackinac, Michigan, to establish Fort Howard at Green Bay in 1816.



# Don McMullen

**Don McMullen and his wife Shirley operate Grandma's Grill in the Village of Egg Harbor. They moved to Door County from New York City in 1980.**



*Don McMullen*

We've been up here six years, and this is my fifth season with the restaurant. We moved because the organization I was with for 20-odd years closed down their New York office. We're in Door County because my wife's sister lives here and my first instinct was to get out of the city.

Originally, we thought we'd go into the gift shop business, which we did for one year. But we realized that people are most likely to spend money on two things — food and lodging. This place came on the market and we bought it. At that time I knew nothing about the food business, but I'll tell you, you learn quick. We operated it for four years as a drive-in, before we put the dining room on last spring. At first we kept it open 10 months of the year just doing take-out stuff. Now we keep it open year-round, because a lot of the local people need someplace to go in the off-season — nobody's open. I'm the only guy open right now (February, 1986) on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.



*"This really is a secluded area up here, and it's almost like living in a different world."*



In the winter, the bulk of the trade is local, but we also get a few truck drivers now and then and on weekends we get a few "pilgrims," as I call them — tourists. I think it's an attitude that some have -- people complain about all the tourists that come up here, and sometimes the tourists get treated rather crudely, but my feeling as a business person is that a customer is due a certain amount of respect. If you want to extract a dollar from them, you'd better be courteous and hope they come back.

We've had to adjust to a different way of life — it's not as fast as in the city, so we've had to learn to slow down. I get frustrated trying to get anything done by workmen — everything is "when we get around to it." When you come from the city, you're used to calling somebody up and getting things done right away. Here it takes a little longer, but that's the way it is. It's their pace, something you have to adjust to.

I like, number one, the fresh air. The drinking water up here is superior to anyplace else I've ever been. Fantastic! And you look at the sky and boy, you can see that it's clear. Opposed to a city, where you can hardly see what's going on. It's a better life. I work seven days a week, so I don't get a chance to get outdoors much, except in the winter and not being too much on cold weather, I can't take advantage of the fishing and so on. I had a snowmobile for a while, but that just made it colder.

The biggest change I've seen in the short time I've been here is the building. I classify it as progress. It's going to happen no matter where you go — you're not going to stop progress. Egg Harbor is the last village in the county to get developed, but in the last couple of years, things have started to move here. In '86, there will be five new gift shops moving in — bang! I'm the local building inspector, so I know what's coming.

The condo-motels are a change. We've got one across the street, and a 280-unit one up on the hill. Two are being built in Ephraim, so there are a lot more rooms becoming available, which means customers. Being a business person, I like anything which draws more people up here. The only people who really don't like it are those who come up here to retire. They don't want to see the development take place, because they want it as it was — a nice, quiet little place. But progress, you're not going to stop.

I haven't seen any changes I don't like, because everything that's being changed is being done from a progressive standpoint. I like to see things that generate more traffic, as long as it is controlled progress — not something like the Dells. What I'm really concerned about is some of the areas and towns that don't have the proper zoning to control development. In the Village of Egg Harbor we have zoning that controls the size of motels, the density, and so on — we have safeguards to control what comes in. My only concern is that if things are going to get developed, they have to be done properly and with taste. We think we have one amusement park coming in — we don't need another one moving in across the street.

I heard a comment from an out-of-towner last week about the building and so on. He said, "You people haven't seen anything yet," which gives me an indication that there will be more. I haven't been here that long. If I had been born and raised here, and saw a transition from the way it was 20 years ago, to see it change would probably bother me. But being brought up in the city and then moving to an area like this, I don't see anything distasteful about it.

I haven't noticed much of the "insider-outsider" thing. I was only in this village a year when people came up to me and asked me to run for the village board. So I did and drew what I thought was a lot of votes for a newcomer. And after that I was asked to join the village plan commission, and then was asked to become the building inspector. Now this was all within four years of coming here, so I don't see a big division between the old guard and the newcomers. If you're the new kid on the block, you have to present the proper attitude to the people who have been here for years.

I think there has been a decline in business and I hang most of it on the economy. But this year should be one of the best of the last four or five. People have developed a confidence in the economy. Interest rates are at a half-way decent state right now. People are in hock for major purchases, but I also think they set a certain amount of money aside to go away.

The symptoms of the decline are fewer families travelling up here; fewer people travelling with their kids. There are a lot more of what I'd have to call "yuppies" — young professionals. In '81, when I first opened up, I had a lot of

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## EGG HARBOR

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### *See map number 26.*

Among the stories of how this village got its name perhaps the best was related by a Green Bay woman who accompanied her husband and a party of voyageurs in six fur trade canoes from Green Bay to Mackinac Island in 1825. The party camped here and the high-spirited paddlers began heaving biscuits at one another. When they ran out of biscuits, they threw eggs. Next morning, the resulting litter made Egg Harbor an obvious choice. Among the town's varied shops and services, the most unusual is Chief Oshkosh's Museum and Trading Post, honoring Menominee Chief Roy Oshkosh, who died in 1974. His memorabilia is on display, and Indian moccasins, jewelry, beadwork and baskets are on sale. The oldest building in town is Levi Thorp's Cupola House, which dates from 1871 and is now a gift shop.

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## STURGEON BAY SHIP CANAL

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### *See map number 27.*

When this 7,400-foot connection between Sturgeon Bay and Lake Michigan opened in 1882, the future of the City of Sturgeon Bay was assured. It had taken five years, from 1873 to 1878, to dig a ditch big enough to let a rowboat through — with much fanfare — and four more years to make it truly navigable. Ships carrying lumber from ports along the west shore of Green Bay, limestone from Door County quarries and tourists to and from area resorts used the canal as a shortcut and a safe bypass of the dangerous waters at the tip of the peninsula. Today, it is still used by lake steamers, but more heavily by fishing and pleasure boats and by chinook salmon on their spawning run. At the Lake Michigan end, there's a Coast Guard station and a very picturesque breakwater and lighthouse. When the cutter Mobile Bay is in her berth, visitors can sometimes go aboard for a tour.

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## POTAWATOMI STATE PARK

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### *See map number 28.*

Sturgeon Bay 54235  
414/743-5123



# Don McMullen

(continued)

***"You've got to face reality and see what's going on in the world. Things are going to change and you had better change with them or get left behind. Progress marches on."***

parents and kids but in '82 and '83 that started dropping off. I was getting older people in here and in the spring and fall the young professionals. Quite a few of them are driving big cars, and so I assume they have big bucks someplace.

Part of the problem might have been misinformation going around to the effect that the campgrounds are full in Door County, which was totally untrue. The only campgrounds that fill up are in the State Parks. The little private campgrounds, basically, have been dying. They're not full. So there seems to be a communication problem.

Door County doesn't have a proper tool to measure the "pilgrim" traffic we have. They check bank deposits and run car counts on the roads, but that might not mean much. There's got to be some kind of a barometer to measure the business. As it is, we just talk to other motel and restaurant owners. They said business was really down last season. Nobody has a good handle on what the problem is.

But I also blame it on the state, the officials we have in Madison, for not promoting tourism. I heard a few days ago that tourism is now the state's number one industry. But what does Madison do? They were supposed to spend \$1.5 million on tourism promotion and they knocked that down by \$300,000. Versus, Michigan spends \$9 million a year on promotion, Minnesota, \$4.5 million, Illinois, \$14.5 million. This is in a bulletin from the Wisconsin Restaurant Association dated February 1. Now, they are saying that without industry-funded promotion, Wisconsin is going to fall even farther behind. I don't understand — for the amount of tax dollars that we would generate by bringing people in from Minnesota, Illinois, and other states, why isn't the state doing more? They now want to tax the tourism industry to pay for the promotion. I don't understand their thinking. But why is Illinois spending \$14.5 million to get you into Chicago? Michigan has had financial problems for years, but spends \$9 million. I've heard that Wisconsin is very anti-business, and I say to myself, why do all these companies want to move out of the state, based on what we hear on TV?

*"Being a business person, I like to see things that generate more traffic, as long as it is controlled progress."*





There may be a negative attitude toward business in this state, but I also think that business blows a lot of smoke to change the attitude. All I really know about is the tourism industry and I know that advertising is the key to selling your product and your state. Why does McDonald's spend so much money on repetitious advertising on television? Everybody knows about McDonald's. It's because you have to keep yourself and your product in the minds of the public constantly, or otherwise they're going to forget about you. It's marketing, that's all it is. The state ought to put more into promotion, so the industry can put more into the state coffers.

It's like all the rhetoric against putting a lottery into the state — all the problems they say it would cause. Everybody is going to go to hell in a handbasket if you put a lottery in. Well, people are going to gamble anyhow, so you might as well legalize it and collect the revenue like everybody else is doing. Why not capitalize on it? I'm a newcomer to Wisconsin, but I think the state is rather backward. It's a little antiquated — has some catching up to do. But Door County is a good place to live. I'm here, and I'm satisfied. It could be a lot worse. At least you know you're not going to get mugged walking down the street, knock wood. We don't have all the conveniences, but it's nice.

This really is a secluded area — almost like living in a different world. The only news you get depends on which channel you watch. People like to stay within their own little environment and they don't want to hear what's going on on the outside. The condos and the time-sharing units are all things that were started years ago down in Florida and the west coast. But the people here didn't know anything about it and didn't know how to control it. That's how all these units got built — because nobody looked far enough down the road. Now all of a sudden Harbor Village might move in and no one understands it. You've got to face reality and get your head out of the sand and see what's going on in the world. Things are going to change and you had better change with it or you're going to get left behind. There's no choice. Progress marches on.



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## IDLEWILD

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### *See map number 29.*

Door County's first resort hotel opened here in 1879 and was given this name by one of its early guests. Today, the shoreline from Sherwood Point, at the mouth of Sturgeon Bay, to Sand Bay bears the name Idlewild, and there are several resorts along the shore. The old lighthouse and foghorn building at Sherwood Point is a picturesque favorite of photographers.

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## FISHING

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### *See map number 30.*

With so much water, fishing is obviously a major sport in Door County. From April through October, shore and pier anglers, and people in boats, big and small, are after steelhead, brown and lake trout, chinook and coho salmon, as well as walleye, northerns, smallmouth, perch and smelt. Both sides of the peninsula offer fine fishing water, and several inland lakes and short streams add variety. There are about 50 charter boat operators from Sturgeon Bay to Washington Island and many launching ramps. There's even ice fishing for trout, walleye, and perch. Good advice for a first-timer is to ask a bait dealer where the action is and how to get in on it. And those who don't care about catching their own can sometimes find fresh local fish for sale and on restaurant menus. And *no* Door County visitor should miss a fish boil.

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## BELGIAN COUNTRY

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### *See map number 31.*

Ten families from the province of Brabant in Belgium came to Wisconsin in 1853, the vanguard of many who settled in southern Door, northeastern Brown and northwestern Kewaunee counties. They still form one of the largest Belgian communities in the country. At first they faced great hardships in their new home, not the least of which was the 1871 Peshtigo Fire. It killed 200 and left 5,000 homeless. Most families lost everything. When the Belgians rebuilt, they made their homes of brick or stone, many of which still stand. There are a number of them along Highway 57 west of Brussels and on side roads throughout the area.



# Norb Blei

**Norbert Blei moved to Door County from Chicago, where he worked as a writer and teacher. Since then, he has written three popular books on Door County people and places: *Door Way*, *Door Steps*, and *Door to Door*. Norb and his wife Barbara live near Europe Lake.**

***"It boils down to greed. Everyone wants his, and then more, and more. Where does it end? It ends with the thing being gone."***

I came up here in 1969 from Chicago. The city had grown unwieldy at that point, with the 60's and all the "revolution" that was taking place. It was more than I could handle. I felt it was time to get out. I had summered here, and was aware of something unique about the place, but hadn't put in enough time to know what it really was. I was looking for a landscape that was conducive to writing — that could quiet things down in my own imagination. I had a chance to buy a place and some land, which I'd always wanted to have, and to try to exist primarily as a writer rather than as a teacher.

At first, I wasn't committed to a long stay. And I wasn't committed to the peace and quiet either and I'm not to this day. I still have days when I'd rather be in Chicago. I differ from a lot of people who have moved here — I've learned that it's not the Eden we're all looking for — and that's been an important revelation. Psychologically, I need to get out of here at times. There's almost too much peace and quiet, come winter, especially, which can really do you in.

The attraction at first was the landscape, and then the people themselves. I had to learn a whole new language, in a sense, the language of nature itself. You understand it by living it, by living through each season. There's a lot to be learned about this place in any season — and probably the most can be learned in winter, about yourself and other people, and about nature itself, by sticking it out from November to April. The crowds disappear, and you can see the real structure of the trees and of the people. They disappear in the mass of humanity during the summer. You don't see the neighbor, the farmer down the road, the fisherman. Now, in November, I can hear the tugs going out every morning and I can smell the woodsmoke from the farm down the road and I can hear the tractors and hear the roosters.

But the uniqueness of the county has been this overwhelming presence of quietness, of fields, of trees, of water. Water is a key element of this county. The water has a magical effect on the landscape in all seasons and under all weather conditions. The light is very different here, the effect of water on the atmosphere.

The longer I lived here, the more this place transformed. The peace and quiet is now being destroyed. I can see the urban problems moving here and I would like to say, Stop! Let's take a look at what we left behind in the city and see what we can protect here, how we can live together in a way that will keep this place for the generations, not just for ourselves.

Door County is very attractive to certain kinds of vacationers. They come in, see what's here and want to stay. But they have to find a way to survive, and they do that by undermining the very thing that brought them here. They build gift shops. I wonder how many of the gift shops are owned by the same people for any length of time. The names change almost every year. Somebody else thinks they got a good idea: "I'm going to sell nothing but Christmas tree ornaments, and make a killing on that," or "I'm going to sell nothing but pink flamingoes, and make a killing on that." Well, it doesn't work that way. They have one summer and get out of it. The dark side is that they build a lot of crappy buildings that clutter the landscape, and then sell out. Or, they can afford to run a half-baked gift shop, because they don't want to make a profit — they want a shelter. I think we have too many of those places around.

Then the high rollers come in and see all the potential for condo development, and before long they're going to turn the whole damn county into an amusement park. It has elements of that already. The essence of it is lost, destroyed. I don't know how to change that. It boils down to greed — the center of it all. People hate to recognize it, but everyone wants his, and then more, and more. Where does it end? It ends with the thing being gone.

I could see it happening early on when the orchards were disappearing. They were disappearing because there was no money to be made. The cherry business was going down the tubes and it was more profitable for a guy who owned 80 acres of cherries to sell off 40 acres for the development of something he would grow to hate. But he had to do it.

And yet that doesn't scare me as much as the wheeling and dealing in the towns, where big developments are being built and you no longer know where the money's coming from, who owns them. Once we knew that this guy was selling to that guy and we had the names, but now we've got corporations and you don't know who you're dealing with. That's the scary thing.



At times I think the only possible solution would be for the Nature Conservancy to come in and buy up the whole place.

What would level off growth? You can't throw out the idea of some sort of catastrophe; the whole groundwater problem might suddenly erupt. And that, in a sense, might save us all, a blessing in disguise. As we continue to pattern ourselves, unconsciously perhaps, after the Dells or an amusement park, another class of people will begin to occupy the area, and that will put a brake on things too. A lot will be lost. I'd like to see a change happen before we get to that.

The locals aren't blameless. In the old days the locals had to take from the landscape to be able to survive and that stays deep within them generation after generation and there's always an unexpressed and unconscious feeling that the land owes them something. That bothers me a lot. Do they see the uniqueness of the county as we see it, coming in from an entirely different culture? Do they see what we see, when our eyes are innocent? And if so, can they respect it? I don't know.

I wonder what the native population is thinking, though. Granted, these are golden times for many of them and they deserve the golden times because they've had so much poverty. Now is the chance for the later generations to make hay and their system of values goes down the drain, because they see where the money is to be made now, in development. Everything weakens and softens a little. The codes get a little too flexible. They get themselves elected to town boards and oversee certain construction projects that are perhaps beneficial to friends and family. There's a loosening of ethics and morals and they feel it's their turn — that they deserve it. Now's their chance.

But still, I like the local character. It's much more interesting to me as a writer. It's one of the reasons why I still remain here. The more outsiders with a lot of bucks that come in, the more the local character is thinned out, made less interesting because there are more of them than of the old-timers. And who wants to talk to someone exactly like yourself all the time? You try to escape that by getting out of an apartment house in downtown Chicago. You want to get back to some basics of landscape and human nature.

Maybe Door County will turn out to be a real case study of how to control development. In my heart of hearts, I don't think it will. Back when I did the first book, "Door Way," I thought that those of us with real feelings of preservation, along with some of the locals, could get control of the situation. But we haven't, and now we're beyond that, because there are other layers of outsiders in here with a lot more money and greedy intentions — and locals as well. It will be beyond salvation unless the land itself says no. The landscape and the winter deny certain things and that may be the salvation here.

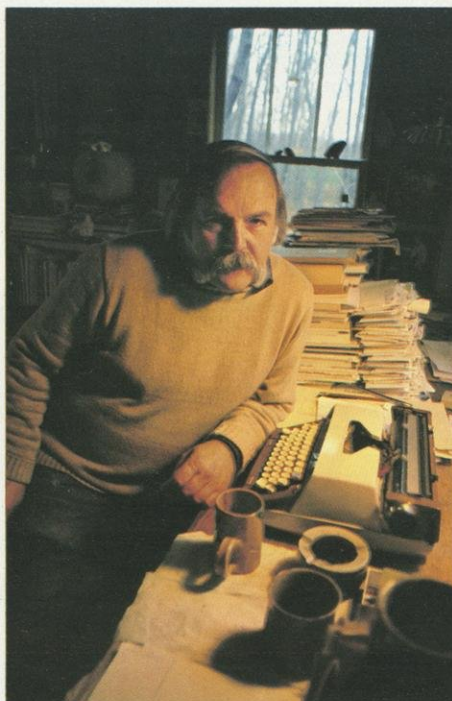
I like the idea of Newport State Park, where you have to hike back in to your campsite. There should be some places that you have to earn, to deserve; it can't all be watching the sunset in Ephraim from Wilson's. That's too easy. Some of the people who come in with a lot of dough want it all that way. They want their condominium to have the best view of the bay. They don't want to touch anything; they want to see it from a distance, cocktail in hand. And as these people get more and more control, they're going to try to make the whole landscape more

accessible. Level off the rough spots to build our motels and restaurants and condos. That's the real rape of the land. Straighten out these roads! Cut down those trees, they're in the way!

Every few years, some new resistance to development comes along, and you think maybe that's going to do it. And then they come up with a way around it. Holding tanks, for instance. The locals say, "Holding tanks? Who the hell can afford them?" But now, there are people with enough money to afford to haul it away, so a holding tank isn't much of a limitation.

If there is a limit, it would have to be psychological or spiritual, rather than physical. A spiritual education must take place, but you can't put a lot of faith in that. It may take a very unorthodox solution. Thoreau's civil disobedience. Maybe it's going to take something like that — I don't know. Maybe you have to find out what people really fear, and then create that fear. What do people really fear in the big cities? Crowding? Crime? That's already happening here — most people are locking their homes, even up in the north end, who never did that before.

Another writer was once asked about his philosophy of life by an interviewer, and after some reflection he said it was simple: "Everything gets worse." Sometimes I think he is right.



*Norb Blei*

Cover: *Ephraim*. Serigraph by Artist Joe Cook, 6930 Memorial Dr., Egg Harbor, 54209. See story on page 38.



