

Wind returns for sailors

Nearly 20 boats competed in last Sunday's races



For weekend results and season standings see "Sailing News" on Page 4

TODAY Corn & Sausage Roast
5 P.M.

at the
Birch Lake Yacht Club
Adults \$6; Kids \$3; Tots free

LAST DAY FOR RESERVATIONS!! FOR THE FALL DINNER

Saturday, August 25
Birch Lake Yacht Club

6 pm Cocktails - 7 pm Dinner
\$10 adults - \$5 children

Polish Dinner Buffet: chicken, sausage, potatoes,
sweet/sour cabbage, noodles, green beans,
roll, cream pies

Reservations must be received by **BY 8/18**
Sign up at Corn & Sausage Roast, or deliver \$\$\$ to:

Jim Bolinger
63276 Birch (east side)
or call 476-9737
DON'T DELAY - CALL TODAY

COMMODORE'S COMMENTS

My thanks to Jim Beck, Don Harman and Bob King for setting up and running the KIDS Regatta. We had about 20 sailors who enjoyed the race, refreshments and T-shirts. Lind Harman took a photo of the kids who participated in last year's regatta, put it on the computer and transferred it to the T-shirts. Great job, Lind!!

Remember to attend the Homeowners Annual Meeting on Saturday, August 18 at 10 am at the Yacht Club. This will follow the 9 AM Birch Lake Yacht Club board meeting.

Saturday evening will be the Corn and Sausage Roast. John Gableman and his crew will be working hard to prepare your meal. The food is always great and everyone has a good time. Be sure to attend!

The following Saturday,

August 25 is the Fall Dinner and Annual Meeting. The tickets are going fast so be sure to get your reservations and money to Jim and Debbie Bolinger by 8/18. This meal will be catered, so they need to know how many meals to order. Following the meal will be the BLYC Annual Meeting. We will have an election of Directors and welcome the new Commodore. Please plan to attend even if you can't make it to the meal. It is open to all members.

I want to thank Buzz Rasmussen for his work on the VCR tape "The Four Seasons of Birch Lake" and Betsy Custard for designing and selling the sweatshirts. These were the two BIG fund raisers for the yacht club this year. Make sure you pick up your sweatshirts and there are also a few tapes left.

Your Commodore
Mike Machalleck

Birch Lake Calendar

8/18-BLYC Board Meeting 9am
Homeowners Assn. 10 am
Corn & Sausage Roast

8/25-Fall dinner/annual meeting
9/3-Labor Day Regatta
9/08-BLYC Board Meeting 9am



If you have items for the BARKER, please put the materials in the Barker box at 63174 Birch Rd. (East Shore) by 3 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, or e-mail the info to me at sailorphil@philvitale.com by Monday at Noon. If you must mail (10 days prior to desired publication date) to Phil Vitale, 122 So. Michigan, So. Bend, IN 46601, or fax your items to (219) 232-3853. To contact me, call Phil at 476-1680 or (219) 232-3735.

Note: All times in the Barker are IST (Indiana Standard Time) unless stated otherwise

Birch Lake Notes

Birch Lake Kidzatta

Thanks to all of our sailors who persevered Saturday's light wind conditions. One would have thought it was one of our Sunday season races of late, i.e. no wind. Nevertheless, ten craft and crew were at the line for the start.

In the first race Sidney Krueggel and crew captured first place, skipper Neil Troeger and Dad were a close second, and Carrie Curtis and David finished third in the Sunfish class. In the MC class, Abby Rondot and Grampa Don Harman were first, Conner Stigner and Rick Harman were second, and Tyler Rondot and Harold Cranmer were third. The only Catamaran, crewed by Amanda Lacy and Bob King, obviously finished first in their class.

The second race saw only 5 boats at the start, due to the non-existent wind!!! All classes started together on this race. Tyler Rondot and Harold Cranmer finished first. Amanda Lacy and Bob King were second. Abby Rondot and Don Harman third, Michael Curtis and Jim Bolinger fourth, and Conner Stigner and Rick Harman were fifth. All things considered, I think everyone had a great time despite the lack of wind. Some crews actually towed their boats for a while, and Don Harman had a novel idea of having his wife and daughter assist him with a leaf blower!!! Fortunately no protests were lodged!!

Again thanks to all who participated — wish there had been more wind. A big thank you to Don and Lind Harman and family for hosting the event again this year, and providing refreshments and T-shirts for all the kids. Thanks also to my crew on the committee boat, Phil and Sandy Vitale, and Bruce Wagner.

-Jim Beck, Fleet Captain 2001

News From The Cove

By Sunny Waters

To John Gableman and his crew who man the grill at the Corn and Sausage Roast, I sadly offer my regrets. It has been a small but meaningful tradition that I make a trek up the hill to bestow a blessing upon the red-cheeked, handsome hunks and make sure they have plenty of lemonade and juice boxes. Be brave, gentlemen; this year I will be with you only in spirit due to a hapless conflict.

What, you may ask yourselves, could possibly supersede this long-awaited annual tribute to grease?

It is, dear friends, THE GREAT AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL CLASS REUNION!

The Mishawaka High School class of '56 will gather for an evening of "do you remember...golly, you haven't changed a bit, we've got to get together more often, let me show you my grandchildren's photos, etc."

But before the gala event takes place there is a tremendous preparation frenzy. Cosmetic counters are wiped out, hair salons are booked solid and department stores lingerie departments are sold out of a popular item called The Tummy Tamer. (B.S. renamed it Meat Packer). We have dieted, we have Clairoled, we cake on the Estee Lauder and make our way

into a room of much older-looking people. Minutes after arrival a chunky, smirky man saunters up and says, "Hi! I remember you when you were cute an thin." Oh swell, it's Marvin who used to do disgusting things with his nose in study hall. Desperately I scan the crowded room in hope of signaling B.S. to rescue me. I spot him chatting with a former cheerleader who has squeezed her size 16 into her cutesy Size 6 uniform and is tickling everyone who walks past with her pom poms. I am beginning to seethe when Marvin the nose sculptor yells in my ear, "Hey, they're playing our song! Let's dance." Not at all certain my Tummy Tamer would hold up to Rock Around the Clock and marvin's sweaty hands, I excuse myself and hole up in the ladies until dinner is served.

The evening dwindles and the crowd thins. Someone starts singing the Mishawaka Fight Song and nostalgia sets in. Everyone hugs, eyes are dabbed and we all silently wonder if we'll all be together again at our 50th. Even Marvin gets a warm, if brief, hug from me.

Though I'll miss the frivolity at the Corn and Sausage Roast, it will have been worth it.

-Sunny



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Birch Lake Notes

High tea at South forty

The lake residents are all atwitter over the fabulous fete held at the Reynolds' last Saturday. The gala affair was held in honor of Major and the future Ms. Karen O'Brien. The event was hosted by Dr. Charles Peterson and his lovely wife, Julie, the ever popular Buzz and Linda Rasmussen, and of course, the age-defying Dan Reynolds and his child bride, Janet.

Attending from the lake were the Doolittles, the Abermethys (formerly of the North Shore) and John and Linda O'Brien. The glorious cuisine of numerous little triangles of white bread and various dollops of different-colored stuff was highly praised by one and all. Tea from around the world was offered and happily

consumed in copious quantities.

The bride and groom were delighted with the incredible array of gifts. The bride was beside herself when she opened her fifth salad bowl set and was ecstatic with yet another crystal punch bowl. There was not a dry eye in the place.

The outfits were spectacular. Ms. Reynolds wore fetching multi-colored rayon clam diggers adorned with glittering trim beneath a shockingly sheer blouse and was closely attended by Mr. Doolittle and Mr. Rasmussen.

The decorations were cleverly mixed with black lights and a startling array of taffeta and chiffon which complimented the Reynolds' lovely collection of black velvet paintings. It was yet

another memorable event at Camp Reynolds.

It was big!!!!

Have you ever wondered if that guy in the red bass boat catches any fish? This past Thursday, August 9, at 9:30 am on a partly cloudy day, Kerry McCoy, East side, landed the big one. Statistics: Small Mouth Bass; 21-3/4"; 5 lbs.; 14=3/4" girth; estimated age: 15; Birch Lake Location: a secret!

Per Kerry, the trick was to get it in the boat without a landing net. Kerry, being a true fisherman, to the applause of witnesses, released "Big Bertha" for another day. Now only the story, the pulling line, the number of leaps, the fish looking him in the eye, the fight the fish put up —

gets embellished with each retelling.

Sounding off

First, a note of thanks: I hoped we could develop some boat-speed amongst the Kidz of Birch. Having spent some time with Amanda (Ball) Lacey during the recent RegattaKidz, I'm confident we are on the proper course. As the kids develop friendships I expect the parental involvement will become irrelevant. Thanks to Paula Toth Russell, Elizabeth Parkinson & Amy Troeger for sponsoring youth events this season. Likewise the efforts of Jim Beck, Fleet Cap'n and the Harmans for hosting the kids sailing. Let's do it again next summer!

-Bob King



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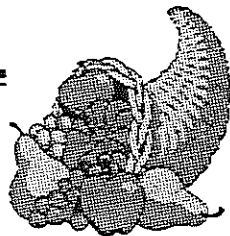
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Pickled Tomato Salad

3 Large Tomatoes, cut into eighths
1 Medium Green Pepper, chopped
1 Medium Red Onion, thinly sliced into rings

1/4 tsp salt
1 Tlbs vegetable oil
1 tsp sugar
1 Tlbs pickling spices, tied in a cheesecloth bag.

and refrigerate at least 1 hour before serving. 6 servings.

All Nighter

2 oz Galliano
1 oz White Creme de Cacao
1 oz Cream

Mix ingredients with ice in a blender and strain into a cocktail glass.

2 Tlbs minced fresh Basil
1/2 cup frozen apple juice concentrate, thawed
1/2 cup Cider Vinegar

In a bowl, combine tomatoes, green pepper, onion, and basil; set aside. In a saucepan, bring remaining ingredients to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove pickling spices; cool to room temperature. Pour over vegetables. Cover

Wind finally returns to Birch Lake



Sailing News

Results for Sunday, Aug 12, 2001

SUNFISH	Race 1	Race 2	Race 3
Jim Bolinger	3	3	3
Jeff Howard	5	9	5
Bob King	1	6	2
M. Machalleck	6	2	DNS
Dave Olson	2	4	7
R. Russwurm	9	8	8
Scott Troeger	4	1	1
Dewayne Weaver	7	5	4
Jody Meyers	10	10	DNS
Bill Carpenter	8	7	DNS
Stewart Spratt	DNS	DNS	6

MC's	Race 1	Race 2	Race 3
Harold Cranmer	1	1	3
Don Harman	2	2	2
Rick Harman	3	3	1

CATAMARANS	Race 1	Race 2	Race 3
Doug Weaver	1	1	1
Jack Steffen	2	2	DNS

The following are the season standings as of 8-12-01. Season totals include 4th of July Regatta.

Sunfish	cum. av.	# of races
Tom Howard	1529.40	11
Scott Troeger	1521.93	15
Bob King	1477.58	17
Jim Bolinger	1414.41	12
Dave Olson	1344.27	11
Dewayne Weaver	1275.93	16
Rick Russwurm	1204.66	15

MC's		
Rick Harman	1526.11	17
Don Harman	1516.81	16
Harold Cranmer	1522.16	12

What a great day. It was wonderful to see so many sailors out there. Thanks to the help of my committee boat crew of Phil Vitale, SallyBeck, Amy Everett, and our special guest Neil Troeger. See you all next Sunday.

-Jim Beck, Fleet Captain 2001



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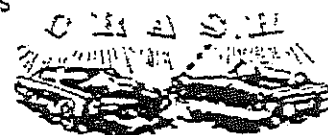
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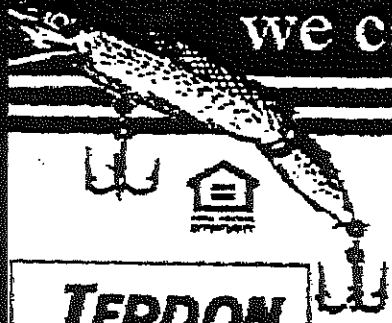
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Citizen monitoring for zebra mussels - background

Beginning in the late 1980s, Michigan Sea Grant coordinated a program called "Zebra Mussel Watch" to track the spread of mussels from their original 1986 point of introduction in Lake St. Clair. *Volunteers* were given sampling equipment with instructions for identifications of new adult zebra mussel populations. By 1994, Sea Grant had collected hundreds of citizen reports as the mussel invaded every corner of the Great Lakes region. Reports were forwarded to researchers, resource managers and policy makers and the program was suspended.

Since the suspension, Michigan Sea Grant has been working with Michigan Lake and Stream Associations (ML&SA) *volunteers* and the Michigan Department Environmental Quality (MDEQ) to track the spread of zebra mussels to the state's inland waters. The program named "Detecting Zebra Mussels: A Monitoring Program for Citizens" relies on Sea Grant instructional materials and equipment to collect water samples from inland lakes each summer to be sent to a laboratory where they are checked for spawn, or veligers. To supplement the water sampling project, Sea Grant, ML&SA, MDEQ started a new program called:

"Inland Lakes Zebra Mussel Watch Program - the 'Mussel Brick' concept."

April 29, 2000: *The new program was introduced at the ML&SA 39th Annual Conference Banquet. The centerpiece at each table was 8 Zebra Mussel Hotels. We were asked to take a hotel back to our lake: 1) suspend it as deep as possible at the end of our pier at least one foot above the bottom 2) check for zebra mussels throughout the summer 3) encourage a neighbor to participate 4) report the results to Sea Grant, ML&SA and MDEQ.*

The "Mussel Brick" concept resulted in the hanging of bricks not on just 2 piers but on each of the 189 piers at Birch Lake: 29 Group Leaders around the lake participated with lakeside neighbors to monitor bricks and hand pick zebras from beaches, boats, docks, equipment.

Sea Grant, ML&SA, MDEQ appreciate the dedication of the Birch Lake volunteers.

The BRICK is the source of new infestation information this summer and each summer!

- Both positive and negative results are necessary to track the spread of the zebra mussel as it relates to the veligers and the infestation at different locations around Birch Lake.
- Report your brick results to Gertie Temple by Sept. 15: Drop in - call in - or mail in.

BLYC Water Quality Committee will forward the report to Sea Grant, ML&SA and MDEQ. They need to receive the report so they will know: Birch Lake IS a part of the official Zebra Mussel Brick Watch Program. The results will improve their understanding of the spread of zebra mussels to inland lakes. *Thanks for helping them to help Birch Lake.....*

Mike Klepinger, Exotic Species Coordinator at Michigan Sea Grant, Michigan State University, tells us that zebra mussels can contaminate lakes when boaters and anglers unknowingly transport the clinging veligers (larvae) from infested waters.

The early detection of zebra mussel populations allows lake managers to develop programs to stop the spread of the zebra mussel. Sea Grant, Michigan Department Environmental Quality, Michigan Lake and Stream Associations, Michigan Department Natural Resources and Cass County Agencies are assisting the BLYC Water Quality Committee in the developing of a program to stop the spread of the clinging veligers at Birch Lake.

Veligers are attaching to our clams and transforming into juvenile forms which are growing into thick mats on each other and suffocating the clam. Last summer, Bob King, now Past Commodore, expressed concern that the zebra mussel could cause the elimination of our Birch Lake clams that he grew up with: their bubbles, their paths in the sand.

Now a word from Birch Lake, who like Bob, is also concerned about the clams:

Pick up the clam.

Clean off the zebra mussels.

Destroy them.

Place the clam back in the water.

Remember to notice their bubbles.

Remember to notice their paths.....

-g temple



Kids Regatta a hit!

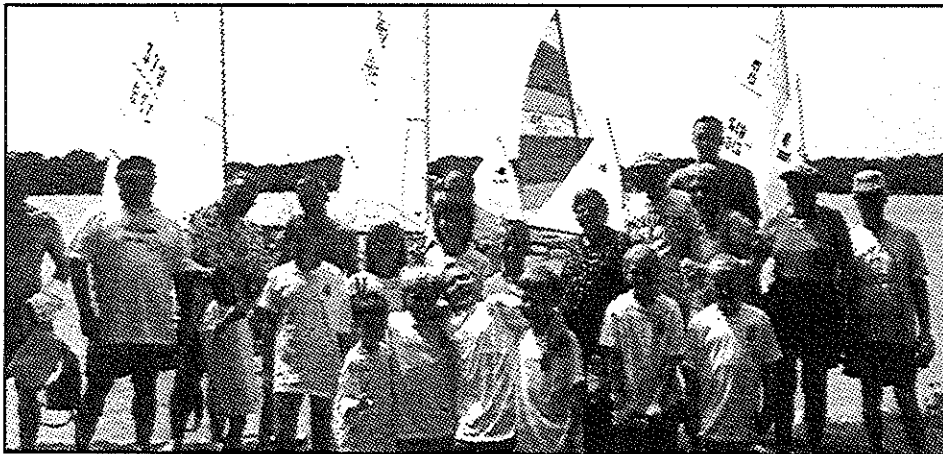
Saturday, August 11th, 2001 — the Birch Lake Yacht Club sponsored the 4th annual RegattaKidz. This event was intended to rescue kidz from other distractions to experience the natural order of things and learn a love for sail. It seems that when the world went to solo-sailing, we overturned the evolution of crew-becomes-captain. The sailing instructions require a kid on board to compete.

Sadly, the morning breeze went flat by mid-day. Still, we had a good collection of Sunfish, MCs and one lonely Hobie-16 come out to play. Don and Lind Harman (East shore) hosted a swell pre-race gathering. Kidz were given soft drinks, juice, snacks, cookies and allowed to do what youngsters do when left to their own devices. Sailors watched with weather eyes, hoping for wind that never arrived. After reasonable delay, Past Fleet Captain Scot huddled the crews to check that everyone had a PFD and described the race. His explanation included home-spun graphic charts displaying beat, reach, run, the "no-go" zone and the course. Each kid was given a RegattaKidz shirt, a group



photo was taken and we hit the water. Swimming and squirt gun battles broke out during racing — but that's the order of the day. Two drifters were sailed on a there-and-back-again reaching course (no beats, so even captain-kidz are not "in-irons"). Fun was had by all, and hopefully some of these same kids will still be sailing when the rest of us are relegated to rockin' chairs.

-Bob King



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BOB SPEAKS OUT ON THE RACE

Birch has endured a drought of sorts: a month of no wind was broken by the fresh breeze last Sunday, August 12. Ten Sunfish, three MCs and a couple Cats showed up to do battle. The sailors (being shut out so many Sundays) set about to sail three season races. Oh, my aching quadriceps!

Race 1: I had a truly ugly start and was in-irons making sternway (going backwards) with the clock down to ten seconds. I suspect it was 20 seconds after the gun before I crossed the line. This actually worked well as I caught a couple shifts, sailed on lifts and literally inherited the lead half way up the windward leg. Despite spending too much time staring over the transom, I held my place with a loose cover all around the course. Feeling smug, I sailed back down to the start-box and took a nice swim before the next race.

Race 2: having learned little I managed to botch the start again and trailed the pack across the line. No clean air this time and my usual "clearing maneuver" seemed senseless, as port tack was lifted towards the first mark. There I was, eating bad air and slipping out of contention. I did eventually take a couple tacks in search of good air, each time on headers, losing ground in the process. I wanted more to finish and start again than anything else and dutifully did so. BTW (by the way), friend Stewart later asked how one scores a first then a sixth — the easy-bake recipe is above.

Race 3: a gun start and good air propelled me to the front. After the top mark I caught several good wakes to surf and extended into a comfortable lead on the reach. I decided to gybe early to have a clean rounding, but to my dismay touched the second mark. Now, no one saw, #2 and #3 were easily over 100 yards distant, but the remedy is simple enough — reround the mark and sail on. I gathered speed, kept the turn going and circled to round cleanly. But, something was wrong, the mark was suddenly close and closing on me fast! This is not supposed to happen. Buoys being inanimate objects should not move of their own accord! I had hooked the daggerboard on the anchor line and was drawing it towards me. I raised the board an instant too late — I'd hit the mark again! OK, settle down, round again (with a bit more arc) to the sounds of laughter coming down the wind — Scott and Jim were now nearby.

The next leg I tried ever so hard to compose myself but Scott was on my wind and I could hear his breath from astern. He drew even and passed.

Fido Training Tips

Having trouble getting Fido to come when called. Simple training tip: Cut up a hot dog in small bite size pieces. Place them in a bag to carry around in your pocket.

When calling your dog never use more than two words. Example: "Fido here" or "Fido come." Every time you call for Fido and he/she comes to you, reward them with a piece of the hot dog. Before you

know it, problem solved.

Bad barker!

Take an empty, clean spray bottle and fill it with water. Add a couple of tablespoons of lemon juice. When Fido won't stop barking, spray them in the face with the mixture.

NOTE: You can only use this training technique on your own dog, not your neighbor's dog.

Checking his p-mail



Happy Tails!

-Fido's Friend

Too d*ed (darned) close**

The last couple weekends boats have come close to getting a tomato-surprise — but, more on that later.

Saturday August 3rd I was sailing the Hobie off the South shore with Kim, Les & Cal onboard. A boat towing a tube came within 35' at planing speed. Though not animated in response (visual shrug), I was not amused. I don't want someone with such poor judgement coming so close.

Now some who read this might smile at the irony, a case of the pot-calling-kettle-too-close. I have been guilty of buzzing fishermen (by accident!) in years past. But, really, I did not see the

fisherman in question & sincerely apologize. I should have allowed the obligatory 100' PLUS the length of my towline from those kind souls feeding & fattening our fish.

The Hobie has bright colorful sails, and the transgressor (mentioned above) clearly saw me. The same thing happened again this past weekend. So, here's the deal: I am getting old and have a hitch in my throwing arm rotator cuff. Recent scientific tests indicate I am unable to throw a tomato over 100'. As that happens to be the distance you are required to stand-off, I'm serving salad to the next boat in range :0)

Seriously, let's be careful out there...

-Bob, past C2k

I gybed my sail onto starboard and we sailed on together, me on proper course and him just outside on favored port making a touch more speed. When I gybed back on port to steal his wind (now near the mark) he headed up as privileged leeward boat, gained ground and snuck ahead inside. I could spend an hour debating who had right-of-way and when during the leg, but was determined to shake it off, play a couple shifts and win out to the finish (instead of fixating on my earlier idiocy).

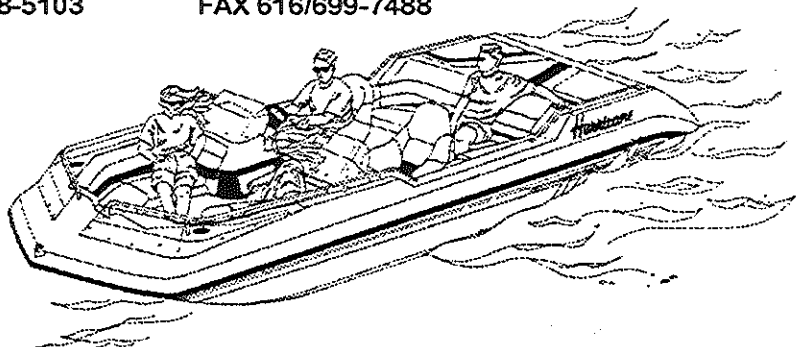
The last leg to windward looked good. We were split apart nicely where anything can happen and it appeared to me as if I had overstood the

mark — it was now a fast reach — my course better than Scott's. The boat end was favored (closer end of the line), so rather than remain close-hauled I eased the sheet and put on speed. Finishing fast is an art. I kept my head "out of the boat" watching telltales and sail shape instead of the opponent. Eventually I looked down and to my surprise the boat I'd been heading for was gone — it was just a spectator boat near the line (similar to the Beck's boat). I was now below the line altogether. I crossed the line second and went ashore counting both blunders 'n blessings. **Motto:** don't let racing ruin your day, nor take it too seriously...-Bob



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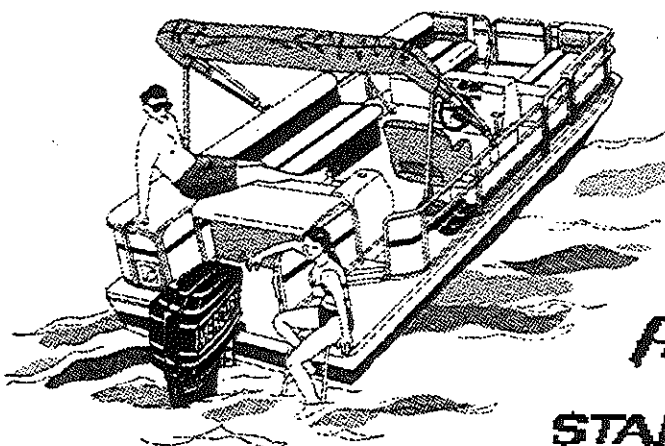
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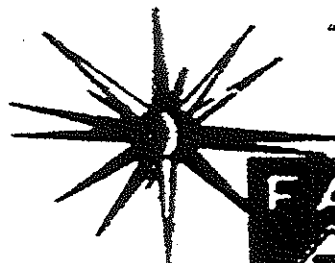
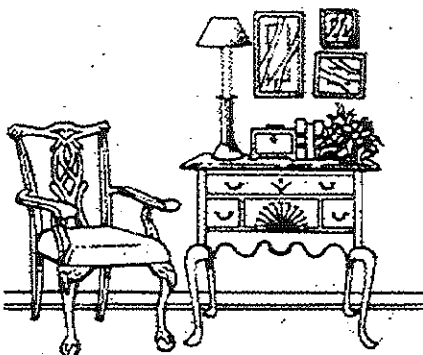
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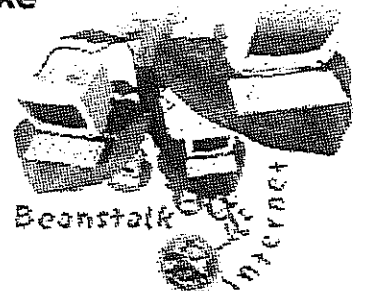
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Lake people and non-lake people

Over the years we've been at Birch I've come to realize that there are two sorts of people, lake people and non-lake people. I'm a lake person. I loved this place from the first moment I saw it. Shirley Anne and I were in the third or fourth week of our very brief courtship when she brought me to her parents' cottage in the cove.

We came down the hill, and I saw the water and that was it, instant devotion. It took us a decade before we could afford a place of our own, but we'd have found a way even if we'd spent 30 years saving the money for a down payment.

That's why it's so difficult for me to understand and communicate with non-lake people when it comes to discussing our home here on the East Shore. It's as though they fail to see a world I find obvious, and I fail to understand problems they consider gargantuan.

My mother is a non-lake person. She grew up in Kansas, a state novelist Earl Thompson compared to "a garden of raked sand," and she's been terrified of water all

her life. Lakes, rivers, fast flowing creeks, and most of all, oceans send her into a panic if she gets too close to them.

She's come to Birch a handful of times but it is an uncomfortable experience for everyone. When she gets out of the car, if I turn her toward the water, she'll get sweaty palms and a rapid heartbeat immediately. She could no more walk onto a pier or get into a boat than she could bungee jump from the Sears Tower, and once she arrives she can't wait to get out of here.

We have a friend from Chicago who has always been puzzled about why we spend so much time and money on these waters. "I don't mean to be insulting," he'll say, "but there's nothing to do."

"Are you kidding," I answer. "We don't have enough time to do all the things we enjoy."

"Like what?"

"Take rides in our boat."

He shakes his head. "I've taken rides in your boat, and the lake looked the same to me on the fourth trip as it did on the first."

"It changes all the time. Besides it's beautiful, I don't care if it looks the same."

"It's kind of pretty, but, my God, it's so small. Don't you get tired of going around and around? And on weekends, with all of those jet skis, you can't relax, but you can't really open the throttle either. Don't you hate it?"

I confess that I don't.

"What else do you like to do?"

"We love to take walks."

"On the roads along the lake?"

"Yes."

"How many times have you done that, walked past those same houses, looked at those same trees?"

"I don't know. Hundreds I guess. Maybe thousands by now."

"I rest my case," he says. "You're either nutty or terminally boring."

He insists that we have to go too far if we want to shop or find good restaurants. He complains that the electrical power goes out too often, and that it takes almost an hour to go into Granger for a movie.

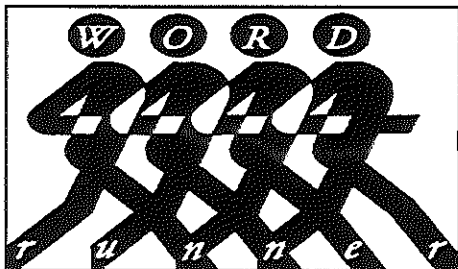
"How much does this place cost you?" he asks.

I acknowledge that I'd rather not think about it. It's a sizeable number.

"You could save a fortune if you sold it, and you and Shirley Anne could rent places on half a dozen lakes every summer. At least you'd have your cash in your pocket and you'd get a little variety in your life."

I thank him for his concern and his suggestions. I think he means well.

There isn't any point in trying to make him see why we wouldn't live any other way. It is one of those things you either understand or you don't. It goes to your essence in some way, the sort of person you are. You come here for the first time and you breathe a big sigh of relief. You've found it, you can stop looking, You're a lake person, and Birch is your lake.



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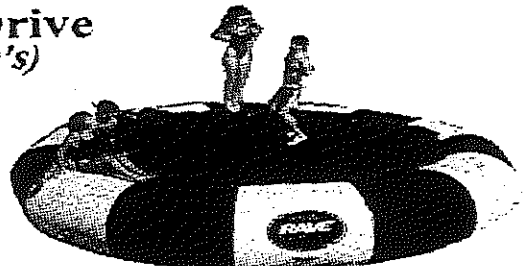
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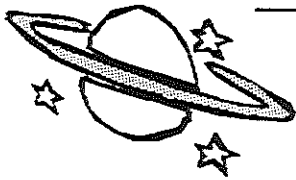
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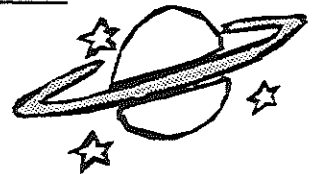
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Appreciating the night sky



It's tempting to think of astronomy as an esoteric science, with giant telescopes, powerful computers, and a gaggle of experts probing the mysteries of the universe. But astronomy is really the most "universal" science. It doesn't take any special equipment to appreciate the beauty of the night sky. In fact, astronomy is an important part of our daily lives. Our clocks and calendars are all based on astronomical events. And even the cycle of day and night is an astronomical phenomenon.

Day and night involve two astronomical objects: Earth and the Sun.

As Earth orbits the Sun, it also rotates on its axis, moving from west to east. That's why the Sun rises in the east and sets in the west.

It takes 23 hours and 56 minutes for Earth to complete a turn on its axis. So if a star is directly overhead at a particular time tonight, it'll stand overhead again exactly four minutes earlier TOMORROW night. But during that time, Earth will move about 1.6 million miles along its orbit, so it must rotate four minutes more for the Sun to return to a given position in the sky. So the stars rise and set four minutes earlier each day — returning to their starting points once a

year.

If the Sun and stars all returned to their same positions at the same time each day, then our night sky would never change. We'd see the same stars, in exactly the same places, every night of the year.

Speaking of things staying the same, our nearest celestial neighbor, the Moon, does present the same face to us every night of the year. To many, this suggests that the moon does not spin on its axis as it travels around Earth. In reality, it does spin. And by coincidence, it makes one turn in exactly the amount of time it takes to make one orbit around the Earth. This is called

synchronous rotation and this behavior is exhibited by almost all moons of other planets — a kind of equilibrium.

But viewing the Moon can still be interesting as its surface is illuminated a little differently each night. Tonight around 11 p.m. the Moon is New and will be hidden from view. Watch this week at sunset as it gets bigger and bigger, approaching full at the beginning of next month.

More on the Moon in the future. There aren't too many warm summer weekends left so get out there and enjoy the show. It's free.

-Stewart Spratt

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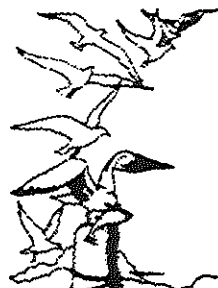
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