

Kids' KOrner

The Incredible Lake Superior

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I first laid eyes on Lake Superior and the big country around it more than a decade ago. I drowned myself in its pleasures: fishing for trout, hunting for mushrooms, picking berries in its pine-scented air.

On my frequent returns to the lake country along the U.S.-Canadian border, I have been heartened to find that it remains as I first knew it, uncommonly clear, still heavily forested, bathed in exquisite stillness.

You can hear a lynx scream, follow the tracks of wolves hunting deer or sail along rock-strewn beaches without seeing a soul. And you may be awakened in the night, as I was in my sleeping bag, by a woodland caribou - vanished elsewhere at those latitudes - splashing through a quiet inlet yards away. I was grateful for the wakeup; overhead the northern lights flickered, like wind rustling the tent of the sky.

"We Indians feel this lake is alive," said Billy Blackwell, who traces his ancestors to the Ojibwa who loved this land. We sat on the lake's Minnesota shore, listening to waves murmur against the rocks.

"It provided our grandfathers with food to eat, water to drink, water to bathe in," said Blackwell. "It has a soul."

It is easy to understand why the Ojibwa fought the Sioux for rights to Superior's often bitter-cold shores. French Canadians who paddled Superior's mountainous blue waves in brick-bark canoes called it "le lac superieur," simply referring to its location above the better-known Great Lakes Huron and Michigan. Superior it remains, in any translation.

Today some 600,000 people live along the lake's 1,700-mile shoreline, but more than half are clustered in Thunder Bay, Ontario; Duluth, Minn.; Marquette, Mich.; and Sault Ste. Marie, on both sides of the "Soo" locks separating Michigan and Ontario. That leaves plenty of real estate for wildlife, unspoiled views and water so clear that, as one fisherman told me, "A mile from shore I just dip out a cupful and drink it."

Superior is the broadest freshwater lake in the world. It could swallow Scotland with 1,300 square miles to spare or tuck within its shoreline New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and most of Connecticut combined. Something waterlogged could sink 1,333 feet at the deepest point.

That's only a quarter as deep as Lake Baikal in Siberia, but the volume of Lake Superior is still awesome. Tipped and emptied like a washbasin, it would cover both North and South America with a foot of water. Those who live on its shores boast about its size as Texans boast about their state, and they complain about the weather as farmers do.

Winters are long, but seem longer because real summer is just a

blown kiss. The warmer weather spreads a green blush over land that is 90 percent forested. The rest seems dominated by wildflowers, with riots of lupine, hawkweed and buttercups.

The colder, summer mildness and wild flavor bring millions of visitors. Winter squeezes out all but a sprinkling of skiers and snowmobilers. By October the northland belongs again to the true lake people.

"This country is not for everyone," said Wendy Bell, former mayor of Marathon, midway along the north shore. "It's expensive — fuel costs especially — and if you don't like winter, you wouldn't be caught dead here."

While bad weather has sunk ships on Superior, squalls of a different sort have arisen over the lake's future. "Its fresh water is our last major untapped resource," said Todd Kessler of the Inland Sea Society, a citizens group based in Bayfield, Wis. "We shouldn't screw up that one."

Damaging pollution of the other Great Lakes has bred concern for Superior. An International Joint Commission, with representatives of both the United States and Canada, has pronounced the lake "relatively pristine."

RosSPORT came to symbolize for me the enduring charm of the lake country. A couple dozen houses lie scattered against a slope overlooking a sky-blue bay and emerald islands.

I sailed out of RosSPORT one August morning on a fishing boat captained by 84-year-old Ray Kenney, retired school principal and lifelong fisherman. First and only "mate" was his wife, Josie, in her early 80s. The other passenger was 96-year-old George Paradise, a retired Iowa judge who has been coming to RosSPORT every summer for almost half a century.

"My doctor tells me I improve when I come here — lower blood pressure," said the judge, a small man, sun-browned despite the pith helmet that covered him like a parasol.

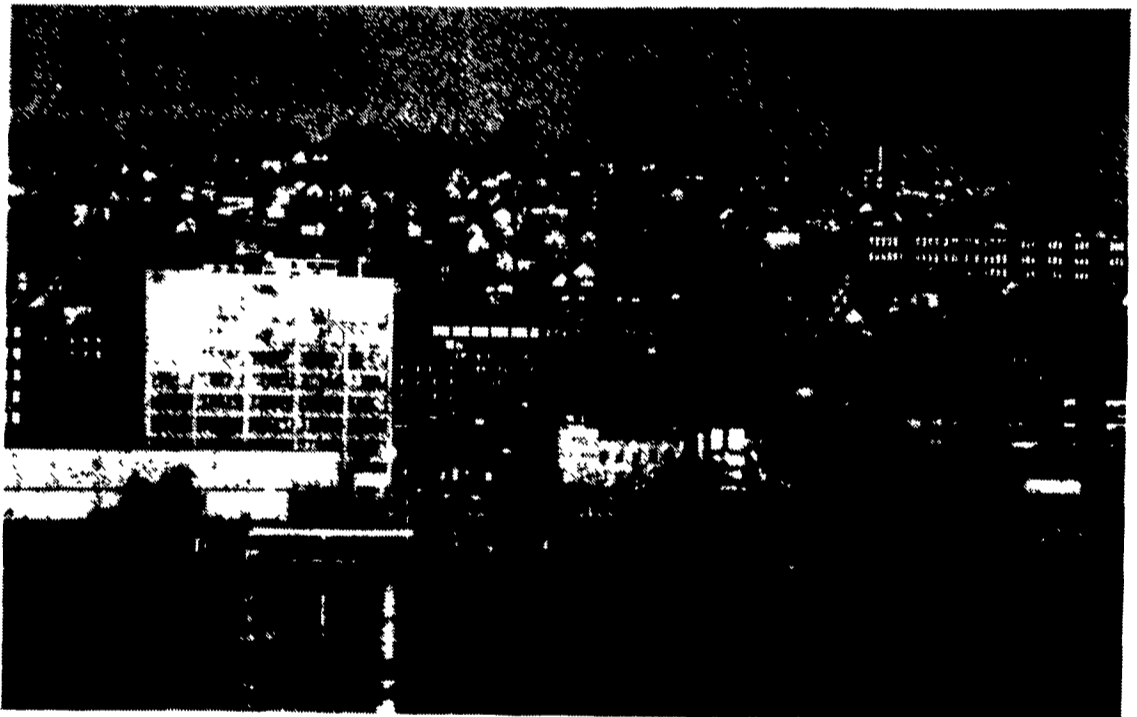
"He and Josie won't admit it, but they're very competitive," Kenney whispered as we trolled over shoals 50 feet below. Josie Kenney struck first with a 7-pound lake trout. The judge answered with 8.5. I reeled in a 6-pounder. In less than an hour we have more than 20 pounds of trout in the icebox.

Superior showed muscle on the trip home, kicking up 5-foot waves that broke over our bow. The judge sat silently in the stern with an impassive Josie Kenney. I chatted with her husband only to hide my own uneasiness. We finally chugged behind the islands near RosSPORT, the waters grew still and the judge wandered forward, brimming with optimism.

"Over there is Eagle Rock," he said, pointing to a slab of old lava. "I was fishing here one Sunday with an Episcopal priest. He insisted that we have a little church service there, and then he told me to lead it." Proudly he recited his words from that day:



Exposing its gentle side on a frosty December morning, Lake Superior laps at the pallsades beneath retired Split Rock Lighthouse on the Minnesota shore. The lake's mood can darken quickly. Gales with 30-foot waves make navigation treacherous. The floor is littered with some 350 shipwrecks.



The skyline of Duluth, Minn., is a sweet sight to mariners who sail into Lake Superior as far as Asia to pick up cargo. All the other Great Lakes combined wouldn't fill Superior, an inland sea that holds a tenth of the world's liquid fresh water.

"Look around you at the hills and trees and the immense quantity of fresh water. Now look over-

head at the canopy stretching over everything, a dome without pillars. Nature is the foundation of all

religion. And this is as fine a church as any man ever preached under."

Amen, Judge Paradise.

WALK IN A WINTER WONDERLAND

Take advantage of the snow and go for a walk on a mild night. You will be surprised at how different normal objects appear on a moonlit, snowy night.



SHIVER AND QUIVER

When it's cold, you shiver and you quiver.

B-r-r-r, b-r-r-r, b-r-r-r

When it's cold, you shiver and you quiver.

B-r-r-r, b-r-r-r, b-r-r-r

Your hands feel just like ice. So you rub them once or twice.

When it's cold, you shiver and you quiver.

B-r-r-r, b-r-r-r, b-r-r-r

IDEAS TO KEEP YOU WARM ON BLUSTERY COLD DAYS

Bet you're having trouble keeping warm on these frigid cold days. You're problem starving after shoveling driveways, sledding, and fighting snow ball battles.

Sarah Clark of Breezewood has just the right solution for you. She thinks Elephant Stew will warm you and satisfy empty stomachs. You will need an adult to help you.

Make sure you read this complete recipe and understand it before you attempt to make it.

ELEPHANT STEW

1 elephant (medium size)

2 rabbits

Cut elephant into small bite-sized pieces. This takes about 2 months. Add enough brown gravy to cover. Cook over kerosene fire for about four weeks at 465 degrees.

This will serve 3,800 people. If more people are expected, add two more rabbits to the stew. But add these only if necessary because some people do not like hare in their stew.