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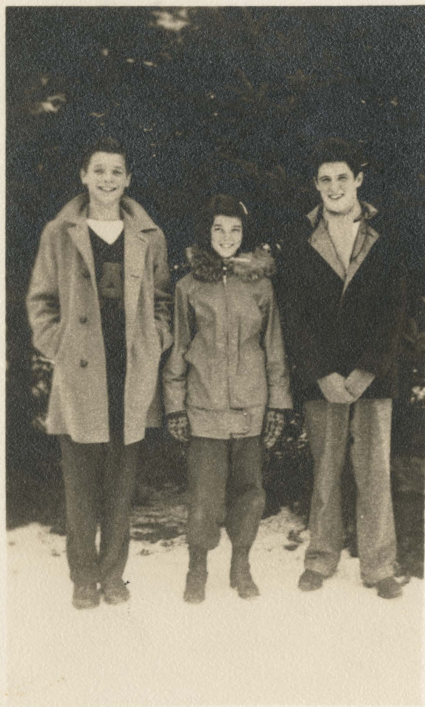




*Season's Greetings*

*Shirlee*





 Best Christmas Wishes  
*The Johnstons*

Marjorie Lind Rickman  
10401 Horseshoe Bend Rd.  
Sonora, CA 95370



12/21/89  
Blue diabetes CD

Notes -

Bobby J.

Same job

Mel's Missionary

Brothers deaths

Cope CD 8<sup>th</sup> grade pic

Africa

Kids

10-15-89

Shirley Ruttger Bates

65 E. Pleasant Lake Rd.

North Oaks, St. Paul, MN 55127

Marjorie Lind

October 11, 1989



Dear Shirley Ruttger....

How that does bring back memories! Do you remember Nisswa School and Brainerd High School and riding the high school bus and having to transfer halfway there?? and piano lessons and Miss Geisler and The Robin's Return? and eating peanut butter on toast and drinking tea one day when I came to your house on Nisswa Lake one day??

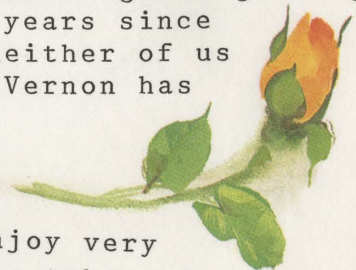
Do you remember the Mills' brothers who also lived on Nisswa Lake in the summer and their boat and water skiing? and do you remember Bobby Johnstone? What did he end up doing? and remember our 8th grade Graduation..high heels, lipstick and all!

A lot of water has gone under the bridge for both of us since those years, hasn't it?

Last June, my husband Royce and I, drove back to Nisswa at the same time my cousin, Ervaline Henderson Wels, was back there with her husband, Bill. We had a terrific time searching out and reliving places, people and things! Thanks to Minnie Ann (Peterson), who made all the arrangements, a group of us got together with your aunt Lois for dinner and an evening of visit. It was too incredible that after all these years there was anyone that remembered that I had ever existed, let alone care enough to make effort to get together! I missed the 40 yr class reunion as my brother was killed in a plane crash just days ahead of that reunion so this kind of made up for it.

My two brothers, Vernon and Art along with their wives, also drove back the next week and we spent another two days looking every place over and reliving our growing up years together. It has been 45 years since either Art or I had been there as neither of us has ever been back since we left. Vernon has made a couple of trips.

There is so much that has happened in both of our lives and I would enjoy very much hearing the details of what has taken place for you.







I'll briefly mention some of my life... I'm not sure when I'll ever get back to writing but I'll answer your letter when ever it might come. I told your aunt that I would write to you back in June and it has taken me five months to do that. Our summer was very full but then life always is!!

I married my husband, Royce Rickman, in Oct of 1948. He was an aircraft mechanic after getting out of the Navy and wanted very much to be a pilot so he began doing whatever it took to accomplish that. He became a pilot for United Air Lines in time but has been retired with a medical the past ten years so we have been enjoying our horse ranch since that time.

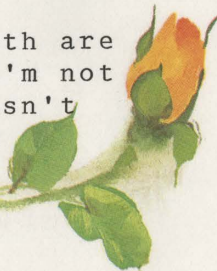
We have three children. A son, Gary, who is 37; married 13 yrs with two little girls, Deborah age 7 and Stephanie age 4. How we do love those two little girls and they spend as much time with us as we can manage. We went traveling in our 5th wheel with them this summer. His wife, Sue, was a nurse. Gary followed his Dad's love for airplanes and became a missionary pilot. He and Sue were in Zaire, Africa for a year and a half. I flew over for a visit for a month before they came home. When he returned, he went to computer school and has been employed with Standard Oil ever since.

Marilyn is 32; married to a school sweetheart. They have no children. She has a great love and understanding of horses and is into that full time. She competes in dressage, teaches 18 students a week and rides 5 or 6 horses that she is training for other people. She struggles constantly with a painful back injury.

Karen is 31 (they are 13 months apart...both are 6' tall--Gary is 6'6"--Royce is 6'4" and I'm not short myself). She has decided marriage isn't for her and enjoys the privileges of being single. I hope fervently she will find Mr. Right one day, however. Life was meant to be lived to its fullest. That is part of my life in "brief form". Would love to hear from and about you and yours.

With Warmest Memories,

Marge Rickman (Lind)













# Public Schools Certificate

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

Shirley Ruth Ruttger  
has completed the Course of Study prescribed  
for the Grammar Department of the Public Schools  
and is entitled to this

## CERTIFICATE OF GRADUATION

Given at Nisswa this 28 day of May 1942

Lois M. Paddycoart  
TEACHER.



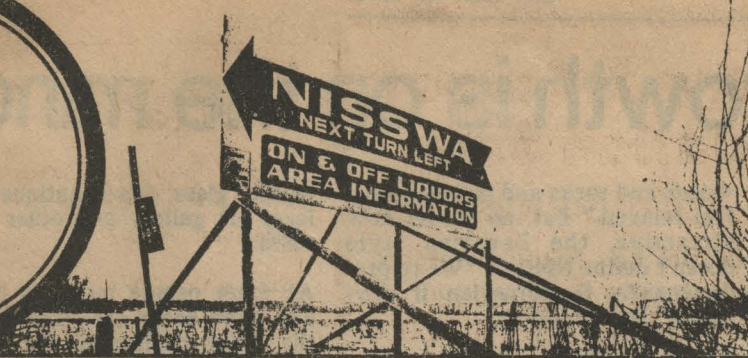
Dear Mass Surely Rooth Butgar,

Ah received yo letter yastaday saflee. Sow  
ham answerin it know. Ah feels so badd cause  
ah was in the housespittable. Yo dint erin  
come an see me. Ah nevair felt sow badd  
in all mah liffe. Yoll half too scoos mah  
penn-manship buttah got an lame han  
fram that their brain oprowation. Ah don'  
sponge all evair git over it. Ah feel like ah  
cood comitt soot-side, buttah don' wan  
too. Hal-e-lou-ya. here com that husban off mine

with som can-dee in hiss arms. What goot-  
buy. Ah iss sow excitted ovaiz the can-dee.  
Sow goot buy. Writ two mea somtime.

Lots off loffe  
Batty Janne Bent-tent-lee





## Folks who remain reveal why they prefer to spend winters in Nisswa

By Ruth Hammond  
Staff Writer

### Nisswa, Minn.

Once only about 400 people lived in Nisswa. Once the residents were mostly retired folk. Once few merchants downtown would even think of staying open past October.

But that was 30 years ago. Now stores are starting to stay open through the winter, younger people are answering the call to the tamed wilds and year-round residents number about 3,000, people say, though it's hard to find them all hidden back in the woods the way they are. The 1970 census takers found 1,011 permanent residents, according to the two identical signs that stand a few miles apart on State Hwy. 371. (One of the signs tells you you're entering Nisswa and the other reminds you — in case you thought the city was over already — that you're still there.)

In many ways, Nisswa borders on being invisible. The second municipal sign introduces several businesses, a city hall, liquor store, grade school and a few houses. Beyond that, not much but woods and water. To track down the people, you have to drive down obscure, winding roads and look for wooden arrows nailed to trees.

Nisswa residents live on Nisswa, Clark, Hubert, Gull, Upper Gull,

Edna, Roy or any other of about 14 lakes, on the 12 square miles of land interlaced by six square miles of water.

The winter residents readily drew portraits of themselves and each other to explain who they are and why they're in Nisswa. Most of the residents could be categorized as follows:

■ **The retired folk:** What better relief from years of grueling labor than a winterized cabin deep in the woods, a couple of fishing rods and a snowmobile? Due to the influx of younger people, the retired no longer are the majority. Exact counts are hard to come by because many are summertime residents who added a furnace to the cabin and quietly moved in.

One thing the retired don't have to worry about that some others in the no-industry town do, is the scarcity of jobs. Some residents, such as Mayor Joseph Kasper and his wife Evangeline, rent out cabins in summer for a little extra income. Others are content to rest on the laurels of their past under the pines of their present.

■ **The hard-driving Iowans:** A mere seven hours on the road will take you from Des Moines to Nisswa all in a Friday evening. Bill Hitz, 56,

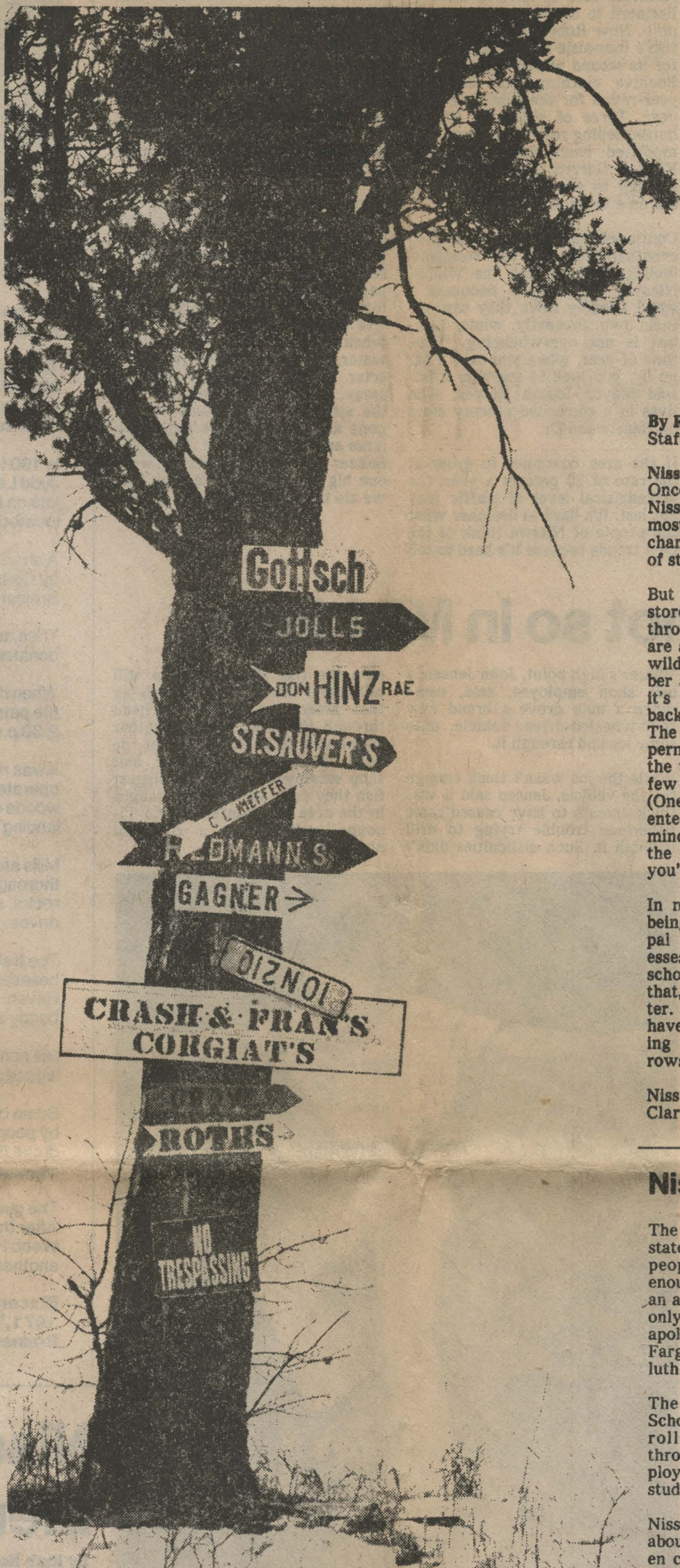
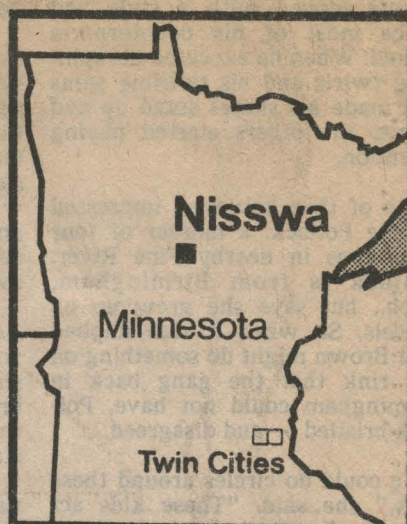
People continued on page 4B

### Nisswa/ a glance

The Nisswa area is the hub of the state, according to a number of the people who live there. It's far enough away from major cities to be an attractive recreation area, yet it's only 145 miles northwest of Minneapolis and St. Paul, 125 miles east of Fargo, N.D., 105 miles west of Duluth, and 15 miles north of Brainerd.

The largest employer is Nisswa School, with about 340 students enrolled in grades kindergarten through 6th, and 24 full-time employees. Junior high and high school students are bused to Brainerd.

Nisswa's tourist industry includes about 50 housekeeping resorts, seven campgrounds, three marinas and two motels.



Photos / Mike Zerby

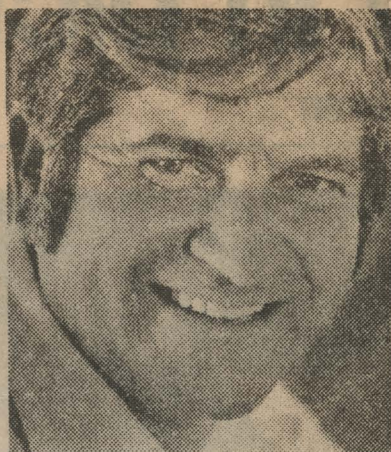




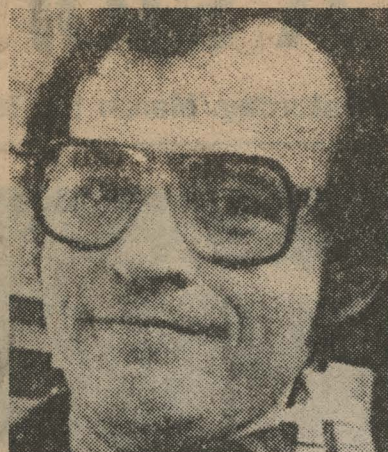
Mayor Kasper



Dullum



Haberman



Hins



Kurilla

## PEOPLE: Bill and Ruth Hitz drive up from Iowa

Continued from page 1B

and his wife Ruth have been making the trip up to their three-bedroom home on Pelican Lake every other winter weekend and every summer weekend for the past four years. Sure, the hours on the road are worth it, the car salesman says. "Friday afternoon instead of goofing around or going out for a drink with the boys, we get in the car and can be there by 9." Sunday they have an early dinner, get about five or six hours of sleep, start out at 1 or 2 a.m. and arrive at Des Moines in time for Bill to be in the office at 8:30 a.m. The roads aren't anywhere near as crowded early Monday morning as they are on Sunday afternoon and "I can do a little thinking," Hitz said.

"It's so pretty and so quiet" on the Hitz's four wooded acres reached by a narrow, winding, half-mile gravel road, Hitz said. "We just like to get up there and watch the snow. We've never been snowed in, but I wish we would be."

"We're hooked and come the first of July, we'll be up there permanently," said Hitz, who is retiring early. Five or six of his Des Moines friends live on the same lake or nearby, he said. "A lot of Nebraska and Iowa people are on our lake. Most of them come and stay for a week or two at a time, not as often as we do."

His theory on why so many Iowans are attracted to the Nisswa area: "It's kind of a new world for us." Nisswa during the summer is cooler than hot, humid Iowa. And in Iowa, the few lakes are crowded and aren't fringed with pine woods. "You go right from the cornfields to the water," Hitz said.

**The resort owners:** These are the people who work hard and fast to make a living from the people who are enjoying Nisswa's frequently hailed "slower pace of life."

"Having a resort up in the north woods is a romantic ideal," said Jim Dullum, whose family has been in the sports shop business in Nisswa since 1927. "Most people think they'll settle in a resort and relax the rest of their lives. And they're wrong. They usually find out that it's too much work and within a few years, they go into business elsewhere."

Lewis and Anita Haberman and the four youngest of their seven children all pitch in to run Haberman's See Gull Resort, Motel &

Restaurant on Gull Lake. Lewis Haberman, 43, ran a gas station in Elk River until the family took over the resort in May. Before that the resort was called Jonathan See Gull and before that, Benedict's.

Like many of the area's other small resorts, it seems to have changed hands often.

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Rollarena, has lived on a lake in the Nisswa area all his life. He and his 17-year-old wife Patti now live just north of Nisswa in Pequot Lakes, but they're "getting out as soon as possible," Jaime says, mostly because prices are too high. The couple doesn't want to move too close to either Brainerd or Nisswa, both of which are "wall-to-wall people" during the summertime. During the winter, "it's boring," Jaime admits.

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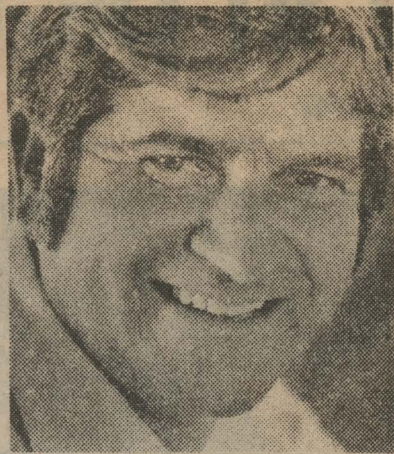
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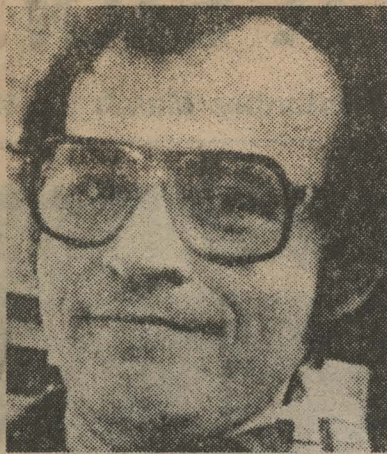




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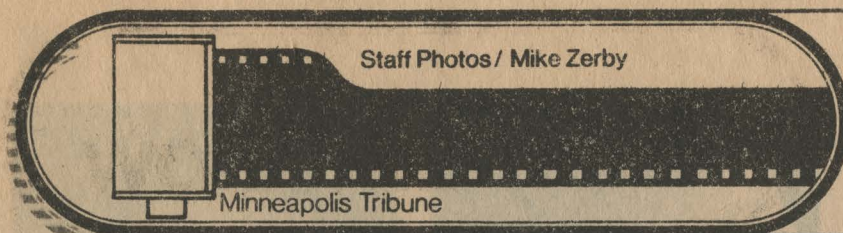
Staff Photos by Mike Zerby

Totem pole in front of Nisswa souvenir shop.

getting crowded. I've got it in the back of my mind to get to Idaho." Meanwhile he is semi-retired and is building two or three duplexes in the Tall Timbers area near Gull Lake.

Postmaster Van Guilder says he came to Nisswa from Minnetonka nine years ago because "Minnesota has always been my big backyard," and "Nisswa reminded me of Minnetonka in the old days." The last four or five years, he says, the influx of people has been great, businesses have been popping up all over the woods and the area is beginning to remind him of Minnetonka again — but not the way it was in the old days.





# A story in pictures

Saturday / March 18 / 1978 / 3B



One of Frank Hochmayr's bobcats was in a snuggly mood.







Cross-country skiers Carol Olson, left, and Darlene Dano went past the Deer Forest sign on their way to a Nisswa restaurant for coffee.





Some of the deer watched the photographer take their picture.

## In Nisswa/

Though tourists are absent, the animals remain at Frank Hochmayr's Deer Forest and Storybookland in Nisswa this time of year.

It takes Hochmayr about half an hour a day to feed his elk, deer, bobcats and llamas. Because Hochmayr caters to summer visitors, these days he spends most of the rest of his time fishing.

(Tourist attraction is deer to his heart. Page 2B.)



Witch stood vigil outside gingerbread house in Storybookland.



Nisswa

# Saturday

# news



## Larry Batson

Nisswa, Minn.

Very likely there is no adult American who has not, at least once, thought longingly of dropping whatever he or she is doing, of moving to a little place in the country near a village and of living simply through the moderate exercise of skills already possessed or somehow effortlessly acquired.

Venison stews, log fires and canoes on still lakes at dawn figure prominently in these dreams. Butcher knives, backpacks, double-bit-axes and three-mile portages are notably absent. Most of us who dream these dreams are the types who search for a full-service island in a gas station when the car needs oil.

But the dreams persist, mainly because now and again you meet people who are making them work, people like Al and Lou Luffey.

The Luffeys came to Nisswa 26 years ago, bought 10 acres in the woods about a mile from the village center and set out to make the good life happen. "Neither one of us had a job," Lou said, "but Al is handy. He got a chain saw and a brush saw and that was the way it began."

Al quickly established himself as a handyman of almost mythical proportions. Residents learned that he could fix a soldering iron or a snowplow and almost anything in between, fell a tree within 12 inches of a mark, find fish and deer, trap foxes, repair guns, make clocks and diamond willow canes — well, his neighbors still went to Brainerd for major surgery, but just about everything else they took to Luffey.

He is 66 now and calls himself semi-retired, though it's hard to tell. Back surgery four years ago ended his tree-felling and he also gave up tending streets, roads and the village cemetery though he did repair a snowplow this week. Luffey still does welding, makes canes and souvenir items and repairs guns and traps.



"At all times, trapping has made the difference for me," he said. "When things were tight, it pulled us through. I done very satisfactory this year. I believe I cleared very close to \$2,000."

Besides his own fur-trapping, he does a good deal of "nuisance trapping" for the state. Beaver, for instance, that are damming culverts and flooding roads, hayfields and yards.

"A beaver," Luffey said, "can be a royal pain. I remember one that dropped a tree on a lady's car and once on a house. Over by Backus, beavers took over a boathouse. They come up into it from underneath and filled it with mud, sticks, trees, built a house right inside. The people came to open the house and the beaver run 'em off. She had a litter there."

Generally speaking, Luffey said, beavers aren't difficult to trap. A fox or a coyote is much more cunning and cautious. But a beaver is maddeningly persistent and a marvelous engineer. "You can blow holes in their dam and next morning not a drop of water will be coming through. Look up the history of Thief Lake. You'll find that they built a federal dam and it went out, but the beavers built a dam and it held forever. It saved the lake."

Trappers are popularly supposed to rove the deep forests. "I hardly leave the village of Nisswa," Luffey said, "seldom get five miles from home. I just drive the car up to where the traps are set and walk to them."

Al grew up in Delano, Minn., and Lou in Watertown. They will have been married 39 years this July and were working in St. Paul during World War II when Al went into the army. He became a bazooka man with the 104th Division and on Dec. 13, 1944, was wounded and taken prisoner by the Germans.

"I was supposed to be stopping tanks," Al said. "My rocket didn't go off and the tank fired back and blew a brick wall in on me. Killed my ammunition bearer and caved in my chest and busted me all up. The Germans picked me up and I was a prisoner for months."

Luffey and another American escaped and reached Russian lines. When fighting ceased, the Russians took them to near the American lines and Al got home to Lou that summer.

He and a buddy from White Bear had agreed that "if one of us saw the other get it, he would try to bury him and also go tell his wife when it was all over," Luffey said. The soldier from White Bear had seen Luffey hit and had covered him with a piece of tin and some boards, thinking him dead.

"When he came back to bury me, I was gone. As it turned out, I got home a day before he did. But thinking I was dead, he went to our home to tell Lou how it happened. He nearly dropped when he saw me."

"They both cried," Lou said.





Staff Photos by Mike Zerby

Two views of the downtown business district in Nisswa.

## There's never a dill moment at 'The Pickle Factory' in Nisswa

By Ruth Hammond  
Staff Writer

Nisswa, Minn.

By liquor were Nisswa residents made village folk, and by liquor are they sustained.

In 1946 Nisswa Township incorporated itself so residents could make a little money on a municipal liquor store. A little turned into a lot, and about 10 years ago, a new liquor store and adjoining 100-seat bar were built. Last year, the store and bar supported the city to the tune of about \$60,000.

Mayor Joseph Kasper, 64, says that 20 years ago, residents weren't paying much more than the price of a package of cigarettes for their tax levy. Profits aren't quite so large now and in 1977, the city levied a tax of \$39,810 on land whose assessed valuation totals more than \$8 million. That aver-

ages to payment of about \$13 from each of the town's estimated 3,000 year-round residents.

The liquor store is known as "The Pickle Factory" and its legend has spread. Every year the city gets a few letters from job applicants who think they can actually work packing dills in Nisswa. Many Nisswa residents confessed ignorance, but a few acknowledged that the name is based on the tendency of some bar patrons to get "pickled."

Bartender Vern Peterson, 48, offered a visitor the only dill pickle in the place. It's about eight inches long and since 1963 has been sitting behind the bar in a quart bottle that used to hold Ste. Pierre Smirnoff. Peterson lives in Brainerd and runs a print shop there, but needs the extra income to help support the 10 of his 17 children who still live at home.

Peterson and night manager Ruth Fordyce, 47, also of Brainerd, have both been working at the bar for seven months.

"We had a lot of problems when we started," she said. There had been trouble with underage drinkers, but Fordyce believes strict carding has weeded them out.

Friday and Saturday are the busiest nights during winter, but "summertime it's every night," Fordyce said. She took the job as manager because she couldn't get full-time work in her field of alcoholism counseling.

After her youngest son graduates from high school next year, Fordyce hopes to return to counseling in Duluth. Until then, "I have no trouble working this job except within me. I like helping people, but I don't think I'm helping them here."



Staff Photo by Mike Zerby

Night manager Ruth Fordyce and bartender Vern Peterson worked at Nisswa's municipal liquor outlet.



# Some of the topics on the minds of Nisswa folks

By Tom Sorensen  
Staff Writer

## Nisswa, Minn.

One of the very basic truths at Frank Whitney's Nisswa Motel is that when tourists leave, towels and ashtrays stay. In the two years that Whitney has run the motel, all his guests have taken with them are a few memories and one wastepaper basket. He would like the basket returned.

Whitney, who also runs an excavation business, will not rent his rooms to just any schmo straight off the streets. Not twice anyway. The snowmobilers who partied all night and the fishermen who brought their catch back to their room to clean will attest to that.

But what really makes the soft-spoken Whitney angry is something he figures more people should be upset about. Then he's not so soft-spoken anymore.

## Salt.

The stretch of Minn. Hwy. 371 Nisswa Mayor Joseph Kasper said

between Brainerd and Nisswa is caked with salt, he said. The salt grabs and tears at the bottom of vehicles, making them old before their time.

"A man I know has got a truck a few years older than mine and it's nearly rusted," Whitney said. "It turns my stomach. Hell, if it snows one-quarter inch, they bring out the salt."

Salt is the reason Whitney's 1975 Lincoln is parked in his garage from the time the snow falls until the time it stops. He shakes his head and wonders why more people aren't concerned about it.

What the rest of Nisswa is concerned about he's not exactly sure. One issue he hears talk about now and then is regional government. The debate generally deals with big government and its attempts to eat up smaller units of local government. "It's something people don't want," Whitney said.

he generally hears what folks want to talk about "when people congregate at the muni (municipal liquor store) or for coffee and not at council meetings."

Kasper is officially retired, serves on a number of public boards, runs a small resort and finds life interesting. He spent two years as Nisswa's mayor about 18 years ago, is in the second year of his current two-year term and plans on running again. "It keeps you active," he said.

Kasper figures the town's biggest official issue "would be sewers."

About 80 percent of Nisswa's individual sewer systems don't meet state code, according to Carol Buckmann, Nisswa resident and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (PCA) board member. A sampling of 10 wells during the summer of 1976 showed that 40 percent were in danger of contamination from nitrates and fecal coliform. Although the sampling method for those tests has been questioned, no new tests have yet

been done, Buckmann said.

Nisswa has joined with four neighboring communities to have a PCA engineering study done and to seek 90 percent federal and state funding for sewer improvements.

If sewers are not the leading issues, then Kasper figures the police department's plans to become members of a police union are. The proposed union's members — both of them — will be negotiating a contract soon with the city council. (The proposed union excludes the police chief, who rounds out the three-man police force). The council plans on hiring a negotiator, and Councilman Dennis Lueck estimates that will cost the city \$35 or \$45 an hour.

"People here don't want a union," Lueck said, and they presently don't have one. The word union, he said, connotes higher salaries, fringe benefits and — to pay for them — higher taxes.

Sgt. Greg Stenglein of the Nisswa Police Department isn't necessarily

trying to start a trend, he said. But Stenglein and his partner would like a few more bucks and some job security, since there is presently no contract with the city. The three-year police force veteran makes \$795 a month.

Issues? Resort owner John Ronlund said that he knows what isn't an issue. Ronlund was asked if he thought the blossoming tourist industry might reach a point where people would try to cut it off.

No way. "Our town was built by tourists," he said. "Life depends on it."

Judy Koep, wife of the proprietor of a large bait and tackle shop here, also knows what isn't an issue.

Depth finders — mechanical devices used to locate fish — don't elicit too much controversy, she said. In the past, some have labeled the devices unsportsmanlike. But this year, she said, she's heard nothing. The bait shop now sells more depth finders than ever.

## What people say in Nisswa

"I lived here when the work was hard to get. If it weren't for the tourists, I wouldn't have no business now. We've always had a big tourist trade. It's probably the best in the state."

Frank Whitney, motel owner

"Oh, yeah, you can get hurt. I've hurt my collarbone badly. If you fall, you get up and learn how to

do it right. That's the only way to learn."

Mike Brown, 15-year-old roller skater

"You have to keep your prices in line with the chains, the Dayton's and the Donaldsons. We have to keep our prices competitive or people who are familiar with prices in the cities will come in

and say 'Hey, they're ripping us off.'"

Lyle Klein, Nisswa merchant

"The difference between winter and summer? What can I tell you? It's like the difference between day and night. In winter there are 2,000 to 2,500 people here, maybe 3,000 on a big weekend. In the summer there might be 30,000 people here. Every bit of the problems the big cities have show up here. Alcohol, drugs, car accidents, you name 'em. If it happens, it happens here."

"Yeah, I admit, it does make life more interesting."

Greg Stenglein, a sergeant with the Nisswa Police Department.

## Holy Week cantata planned

The combined choirs of Trinity United Methodist Church, Lowry and Taylor Avs. N.E., and Gethsemane Lutheran Church, 4656 Colfax Av. N., will present "The Seven Last Words," a cantata by Dubois, at both churches during Holy Week. The Trinity performance is scheduled Wednesday and the Gethsemane performance will be Friday; both will begin at 7:30 p.m.



# Then and now



Waiting at the Nisswa station, circa 1915.

## Nisswa/ earlier years

The railroad was built to Nisswa in 1899 and from that date resorts began to appear in the Nisswa area.

The laborers lived mainly in camps, but some boarded with Mrs. Webb Hill, who cooked and baked for big crews on a wood range with supplies brought from Brainerd. (Webb Hill often carried the supplies on his back.)

In 1901, the first summer cottage was built on Nisswa Lake by Judd LaMoure, a senator from Pembina, N.D. (Webb Hill sold lots on Nisswa Lake where the Lazy Brook Resort is now located.)

A short time later, a second cottage was built on Nisswa Lake by Casper Mills, father of Stewart and Henry Mills, both of Brainerd.

Then, to assure the public of a place to launch their boats, Hill donated a small public access on nearly every part of any lake.

When the resorts first started operating on Gull Lake, nearly all the patrons arrived at Nisswa by train that came in at about 2:30 p.m.

It was met by Stewart Mills and Merrill (Bud) Hill who each operated a launch. The passengers were walked through the woods on a well-defined path to the edge of Nisswa Lake to a landing where they boarded the launches.

Mills and Hill guided the boats through the winding thoroughfares and lakes connecting Nisswa and Gull, around rocks, shallows, large stumps and logs left behind by the log drives of years before.

The train was also met by Sol Marquis who had what is believed to be the first resort on Pelican Lake, known as Haze Haven. Marquis took patrons to his resort in a two-seated buggy and a team of "spanking bays."

His son, Fred, also came along with a wagon to transport the luggage.

Some of the first private cabins on Pelican Lake were owned by people from Missouri. At the end of the summer, Marquis drove them to the depot at Nisswa in the buggy loaded with luggage and barrels of fish packed in old-fashioned lake ice.

The guests boarded the southbound train at about 11 a.m. After the farewells at the depot, Marquis would go down to the Webb Hill place for dinner and wait for the afternoon train and another round of guests.

(Excerpted from a book, "Brainerd, Minnesota, 1871-1971," reproduced from the Centennial edition of the Brainerd Daily Dispatch.)



# Nisswa growth is on the minds of many

By Ruth Hammond  
Staff Writer

## Nisswa, Minn.

One thing people agree about Nisswa: it's growing.

One thing people disagree about: whether that's good or bad.

The desire to attract and please tourists has given Nisswa a confusing facade. The Chippewa name Nisswa was thought to be more pleasing than the original name of Smiley. But Nisswa is not an Indian town. And Evangeline (Van) Kasper, the mayor's wife, says she hasn't seen an Indian in Nisswa for years, a souvenir shop called the Totem Pole and Nisswa Motel's wooden sign of a sleeping Indian notwithstanding.

The architecture in Nisswa's business area is mostly Bavarian. It gives the stores a unified look they didn't have before Jim Dullum of Martin's Sports Afloat started the trend in 1963. Dullum said he was struck by "the domestic and relaxed atmosphere of Bavarian villages" when he was stationed in Germany in 1957-58. Although there was no organized effort, his design of wooden fronts and second-floor balconies was widely imitated.

"The romantic look," Dullum said, "blends in with the Minnesota

woods and rocks and makes people feel relaxed." But, no matter how attractive, the Bavarian style doesn't define Nisswa. "We're predominantly Scandinavian if anything," Dullum said.

So what does define Nisswa? Not mailing addresses. Nisswa residents willing to sacrifice their Nisswa identity can have their mail delivered on Rural Rte. 5, 6 or 7 Brainerd or Star Rte. 2 Pequot Lakes. Another 500 people rent boxes in Nisswa's post office and must pick up their mail.

If the trends of the past few years continue, it may be the city's business area that finally gives Nisswa the cohesiveness that it apparently lacks and may or may not need. After seven years of struggle, Dullum and four other Nisswa and Brainerd businessmen had their bank charter approved recently by the state Banking Commission. The rough-sawn cedar bank building with a functioning fieldstone fireplace was built on the old site of the Spotlight dance hall, which burned down 20 years ago. It's expected to open this spring.

Two other Brainerd developers are converting the old Nisswa Inn to a 17-shop mini-mall expected to open about a block from the new bank this spring. The building will house a restaurant, imported gift shop, nautical furnishing store,

leaded glass store, antique shop, local art gallery and other businesses.

As more people move to Nisswa and more shops are built, more of the older businesses are staying open through the winter. Nisswa residents used to have to drive to Brainerd to do most winter shopping. Now Robert and Elaine Parrish's four-aisle Super Valu is open for its second winter this year and Beehive clothing will be open year-round for the first time next year. Three of about 20 Nisswa housekeeping resorts are open on a modified basis year-round and Realtor Garrett Kurilla says it's nothing to see 100 snowmobilers out on a weekend.

Continued year-round influx may eventually change the residents' feelings that, during the winter, Nisswa once again becomes a small friendly town they can call their own. Presently, winter tourism is not overwhelming. "This time of year, when you hear a car go by, you look to see who it is," said Mayor Joseph Kasper, who lives in a converted grocery store on Hazelwood Dr.

If the area continues to grow at the rate of 20 percent a year, the lackadaisical level of traffic may not last. It's hard to decipher what the people of Nisswa think of the new trends because it's hard to tell

who the people of Nisswa really are. As Postmaster Wallace Van Guilder says, it seems that 80 percent have moved in during the past 10 years or so.

Each person who moves in crowds the last; each person seems to lust after the woods and lakes but hopes no one else will do so after him. Older residents are torn between pride in their area's beauty and prosperity, and a reluctance to see the land and lakes overrun. Of growth, "well, I've got mixed emotions," said City Clerk Dorothy Madison, 69. "I think it's a good thing. But then I remember back how it was..."

In photographer John Ebeling, the issue burns with an endless affliction. "There is no doubt that Nisswa is building toward a day of reckoning," he wrote, in a four-page afterthought to a two-hour interview. "It will be very expensive and sad because it will come when the drinking water and lake water are badly spoiled, the character of the woodlands stripped away. In fact, everything that was the attraction for growth will be gone and we will have (only) the mess and the heartburn. The Alka-Seltzer commercial said it well: one big burp and the lament that we ate the whole thing."

## A star in Nisswa, but not so in Michigan

By Tom Sorensen  
Staff Writer

### Nisswa, Minn.

The girl in the chair adjacent to the roller rink had the kind of country charm that would appeal to grizzled construction foremen, altar boys and most of the people who fall between.

She sat alone at a table for two and watched the 50 or so mostly teen-aged skaters slip and slide to a continuing series of top 40 hits. A few of the skaters smiled as they rolled past, but nobody showed any real inclination to go her way. But, since every roller rink has a designated star, it seemed fitting and proper when the star himself rolled up to her table and grabbed the empty chair at the Nisswa Rollarena. Some things are the same no matter where you go.

The designated star was Mike Brown, a 15-year-old, two-year skating veteran from nearby Lake Hubert.

Brown moved with a style and grace most of his counterparts lacked. When he executed his spinning twirls and his twirling spins and made his skates stand up and dance, the others started paying attention.

None of this, however, impressed Debbie Pollock, a mother of four who lives in nearby Pine River. Pollock is from Birmingham, Mich., but says she grew up on wheels. So when it was implied that Brown might do something on the rink that the gang back in Birmingham could not have, Pollock bristled — and disagreed.

"We could do circles around these kids," she said. "These kids act like they're dead. Look at them. Look at their movement. They're not relaxed. There's no fluid movement out there."

"It's like when I asked my son what enjoyment he got out of riding his Honda (motorcycle)," she said. "He told me that when he got out on the highway and on his bike, he felt like he was the only person in the world. That's what these kids have to do. Get out there and forget there's anything else in the world."

Brown, however, thinks there are other things in the world, like, for instance, basketball, track and girls. But if he had to pick between say, basketball and roller skating, basketball wouldn't even be a close second.

"Skating — you know — it helps you unwind," he says. "It relaxes you. It's fun."

### Winter no deterrent to tales that are fishy

There's a lazy red dog stretching his bones in front of Marv Koep's Nisswa Bait and Tackle shop who pretty well sums up activity in this part of the state this time of the year.

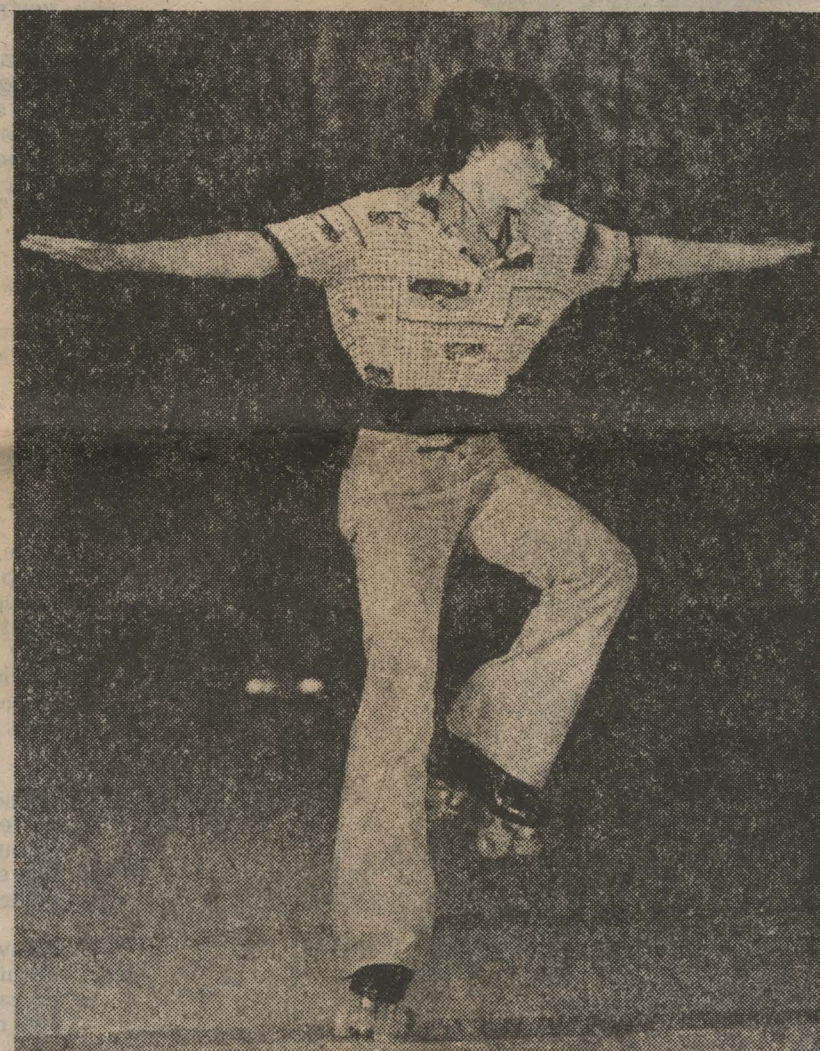
People here are thawing out, unwinding, shaking out the winter kinks and getting ready for the kind of summer that could make a lazy dog smile. The streets and sidewalks that were stored for the winter are about to be unfolded, and life as some people want to remember it is only a few months away.

According to Jim Wentworth, who works inside the bait and tackle shop, life begins when the ice breaks in mid or late April, although the fishing season doesn't start until May 15. But the recent warm weather has added some fuel to the process. Lately people have been wandering in and out of the bait shop just to get their hands on fresh equipment and dream their summer dreams.

Winter's high point, John Jensen, a bait shop employee, said, came when a man drove a brand new four-wheeled-drive vehicle onto some ice and through it.

While the ice wasn't thick enough for the vehicle, Jensen said it was thick enough to have caused some fishermen trouble trying to drill through it. Such difficulties didn't

stop the fish stories. People still talk about the fish that was so big that after you pulled its head through the hole, it took another 10 minutes to yank the rest of the body through. Unofficially, bait shop employees agree, the biggest fish they've heard of being caught in the area this winter were a 15-pound walleye and a 20-pound northern.



Staff Photo by Mike Zerby

Mike Brown, 15, skated at the Nisswa Rollarena.



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Staff Photo by Mike Zerby

Mike Brown, 15, skated at the Nisswa Rollarena.

## Tourist attraction is deer to his heart

By Ruth Hammond  
Staff Writer

**Nisswa, Minn.**  
Not many people know what it's like to be attacked and nearly killed by an elk in heat.

Frank Hochmayr does.

Not many people know what it's like to be a lightweight wrestling champion in Austria, to meet one's father for the first time at the age of 23, to run the first licensed deer park in Minnesota, or that powdered deer horn is considered an aphrodisiac in some Oriental countries.

(In Nisswa/ page 3B.)

Frank Hochmayr knows of all these things and more. He knows animals from the inside out — from the inside because of his years as a butcher and from the outside because of his 17 years as owner-manager of Deer Forest in Nisswa. Deer Forest is a seven-acre park where the deer and the elk not only play but produce an excellent fertilizer for Mayor Joseph Kasper's triangular flower garden. Its attractions include storybook scenes, 80 tame deer, 500 friendly trout, a couple cuddly bobcats, llamas, mounted bear and other wildlife, a souvenir shop and a huge fiberglass slide.

The park is only open from May through September but Hochmayr showed a few winter visitors around. "I started (the deer park) 17 years ago from the scratch here," the 64-year-old Austrian na-

tive said. "I worked 12 years in meat and never enjoyed one day of it. I like this. It's outdoors, fresh air; you do things."

He walked through a barn filled with barrels of fallen antlers and bales of alfalfa. Outside again, he began introducing his animals. "This is Lady," he said of a tame elk. "She's the nicest girl in the city. This is an elk, too. He's very naughty. Oh, he's not mean, just wants to play all the time."

Danny Boy, a Virginia white-tail deer, approached to nibble gently on scarves and notebooks and jackets. "Deer don't like to be touched in the back," Hochmayr said and put his hand on Danny's lower back. Danny's hind end hunkered down and he slinked away toward a Goldilocks and the Three Mounted Bears display.

Hochmayr headed with his hammer toward a back pen where he keeps what he expects will become the biggest elk in the world. It's a year and a half old and already weighs 800 pounds, about half again as large as it should be. "I bred father to daughter," Hochmayr explained as he started nailing the dogeared fence back onto the posts. "He did all this (fence-molesting) during the mating season. He get stupid. He get mean."

Otherwise a docile animal, the elk goes wild during mating season. "Next fall you gotta watch him," he warned Michael Mavis, a visitor from St. Paul. "He kill you. He kill you so fast it make your head spin."

One day about four years ago another elk hurt Hochmayr pretty badly and scared him even more. After he had replenished the elk's feeder that day and turned to leave the pen, the elk charged, knocked him down and rolled him on the ground. When Hochmayr got up, the elk knocked him down again. Twice again Hochmayr managed to get up and twice again the elk's hooves insisted he lay flat.

To gain time in his race to the gate, Hochmayr did a "flying pickle" over a hayrig that the elk had to run around. Hochmayr escaped and collapsed on a woodpile just outside the pen, too injured to move. His wife Irene, who had been summoned by his screams, took Hochmayr to the hospital and one of their sons shot the elk that night.

During a recent visit, Hochmayr invited his friends into a small bobcat cage where one of the tame cats threw its front paws around Hochmayr, purred and caressed him. "Bobcats are the best lovers in the world. Some boys could learn from them."

"I hope they have young this year. Now I feed them wheat germ oil; that will make them mate." The bobcat was distracted from the humans and approached his female partner from behind. "See!" Hochmayr exclaimed. "He's getting the idea. Let's go."

Hochmayr doesn't particularly want the word out, but he is looking for a buyer for his business. "I like to do things," he explained.

"You've got to do things when you're alive, not dead. That's why I'm selling out, so I enjoy even more life."

He and his wife live in a seven-year-old, five-bedroom home behind Deer Forest that she designed and he built of granite retrieved from a St. Cloud rockpile and three rocks from his native Austria. They have five adult children and three grandchildren.

The rich, natural setting Hochmayr has acquired over the years hasn't come without hardship. He had been lightweight wrestling champion of Austria in 1936, but left his homeland on Oct. 16 of that year, just five months before Hitler took over. He met his father, who had left Austria 23 years earlier and was a blacksmith in St. Peter, Minn., on a train in St. Paul and then started working on a Minnesota farm for \$10 a month. On May 5, 1943, his hometown of Wels was bombed and his mother and other relatives killed.

A few years ago, one of the visitors to the deer farm noticed Hochmayr's German accent and asked him if he was "a Kraut." Yes, said Hochmayr, he was from Wels, Austria. "Wels!" said the visitor. "I hate to say this but we made a living ashpile out of that town." And yes, it was on May 5, 1943.

"He could have dropped the bomb that killed my mother," said Hochmayr, without any evidence of bitterness. "But I didn't tell him that. He might have felt bad."

## Nisswa hardware blending of old, new

By Ruth Hammond  
Staff Writer

**Nisswa, Minn.**

When the Thurlows changed the facade of their hardware store to fit in with the town's new Bavarian theme, they got a threatening letter from Mexico.

"You can change the front, but don't touch the ceiling!" warned the summertime customer who was spending her winter south of the border.

The tin ceiling and many of the wood and glass shelves have remained virtually untouched since 1925, when the Nisswa shop was built of the remnants of the family's first Minnesota hardware store. James G. Thurlow, who came from Maine, opened that first store in nearby Pequot Lakes in 1900. The Pequot store was torn down in 1913 to make room for a larger shop, but the lumber was saved.

Unlike many shopkeepers, the Thurlows have barely modernized. "We keep it this way because it's an antique store," said Winfield Scott Thurlow, 68, who took over the business from his father James in 1936. Now, although he still helps out with the work, Winfield Thurlow is selling the store to his 31-year-old son Tom. Another son, Scott, works there part-time.

The store has never changed because "I guess my dad never felt it needed to change," Tom Thurlow said.

Thurlow Our Own Hardware's old-fashioned interior is a bonus, as far as customers and other town merchants are concerned.

"There isn't a thing you couldn't go in and ask for," said Lyle Kline, who has owned the Beehive clothing store down the street since October. "The people who have come up here for years would really crucify them (the Thurlows) if

they ever changed the store."

Tom Thurlow admits that the store doesn't have everything, but it has quite a bit. Seeds for herbs as well as vegetables, Aladdin lamp parts, lawnmower blades for a horsedrawn mower, the usual nuts and bolts.

If Thurlow doesn't have something, he sends people directly across the street to King's Hardware Hank Plumbing & Heating.

The King family, in exchange, refers customers to Thurlow's. The more modern and spacious King store, which grew out of a plumbing operation, has been in 37-year-old Sally King's family for 25 years. She and her husband Don, assisted by their two teenage sons, run the business now.

"I enjoy competition. We need each other," Thurlow said.

Two winters ago Tom Thurlow sold a record 41,000 pounds of sunflower seeds to people who wanted to feed the birds and squirrels. But staying open during the winter generally turns out to be more of a service than a profitable venture, he said. Summertime, when the Nisswa shopping area is described by many as "wall to wall people," business is brisk.

The contrast between winter and summer populations doesn't seem to bother Thurlow, a lifelong resident, much. "You have to expect there will be an overwhelming crowd. You have to not think about it," he said.

One thing he and his wife, Susan, who sells real estate, do think about is the possibility of moving elsewhere—probably Montana. "I won't stay here all my life like my father did," he said.





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