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COVERING THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI SINCE 1993

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January-February 2006

FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

Cover: A stylish ice spearfisherman (Wisconsin Historical Society, WHi-2061)

Above: Storyteller Duke Addicks portrays Scottish fur trader James Aird. (Jeannette Bach)

From the Riverbank

Reggie McLeod
Editor/Publisher

The River is a Complicated Animal

The Mississippi River is a complicated animal. Pinch one end, and you may get bit by the other. Try to take too much from it, and it may do some taking of its own.

Hurricane Katrina brought some of this to light, but the story starts in the Upper Midwest, where farmers are working hard to grow lots of row crops — mainly corn and soybeans. They would probably grow less corn and soybeans if agricultural subsidies didn't guarantee a minimum price and if the subsidized lock-and-dam system didn't make it cheaper to ship the grain to New Orleans, where it is loaded on ships for export.

A certain amount of soil erosion is natural, even without farming. Eroded sand from northern Wisconsin held back enough of the Mississippi River to form Lake Pepin long before any plow opened up the earth there, and eroded soil built the Mississippi Delta thousands of years before anyone planted cotton in the rich black earth down there. However, growing row crops greatly increases the rate of erosion, bringing more sand and silt into rivers and streams and eventually the Mississippi. Now, when it gets to the Mississippi, the dams and dikes hold the water back so a lot of the sand and silt settles out in the river, filling in the lush backwaters at the rate of about an inch per year.

Downstream, the Gulf of Mexico is taking a bite out of Louisiana every year, because the delta depends on the Mississippi delivering a big load of midwestern soil every year. Now, instead of sustaining Louisiana, that silt is filling in the midwestern backwaters. As the coastline recedes, New Orleans gets closer to the Gulf of Mexico and the hurricanes.

So our farmers are losing more soil in order to ship grain to New Orleans, but we're sending less soil down there because of the lock-and-dam system, whose purpose is to increase grain shipping.

So our farmers are losing more soil in order to ship grain to New Orleans, but we're sending less soil down there because of the lock-and-dam system, whose purpose is to increase grain shipping.

Look at a map of Louisiana. Notice the little finger of land stretching out into the gulf. That's the end of the Mississippi River channel. Note the distance from the end of that finger to Baton Rouge, just upriver from New Orleans. Now note the shortest distance from Baton Rouge to the gulf — to the south southwest. There is a lot of water and marshy land along that shortcut, leading one to wonder why the Mississippi doesn't just bypass

(Riverbank continued on page 29)

Big River™

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COMING IN
March-April 2006

Boat Issue

Savanna, Ill., Struggles to Reinvent Itself

Peregrine Update

Contacts (800) 303-8201. For information about stories, columns and River News, contact Reggie McLeod, Pamela Eyden or Molly McGuire (editors@big-river.com). For calendar events, contact Kathy Delano or Molly McGuire (editors@big-river.com). For information about placing an ad in *Big River* or for information about selling *Big River* magazines contact Kathy Delano or Maureen J. Cooney (ads@big-river.com). We must receive calendar events by January 20 to get them into the March-April 2006 magazine. We must receive ads by January 15.

River News

Gambling Bluff?

Springfield, Ill. — Illinois' proposed ban on riverboat gambling caused small quakes in gambling stocks when the Illinois General Assembly voted 67 to 42 last November to repeal the law that allows it. Stocks recovered when the measure died in the Senate, where senators suspected the proposal was either just political maneuvering or an attempt to get more money out of the gambling industry.

Proponents of the bill said gambling profits go to investors, not citizens, and that the state should go back to the drawing board and start over.

Gambling backers countered that the state's School Common Fund gets $700 to $800 million a year from gambling taxes, which have run as high as 70 percent in some years.

When riverboat gambling was legalized in Illinois in the early 1990s, its purpose was to help economically depressed communities along the state's rivers. Times have changed. The first riverboat gambling licenses were sold for $25,000 each. Last year the Isle of Capri bid $518 million for the license of bankrupt Emerald Casino.

Gambling accounts for 1.6 percent of Illinois state revenue.

(*Rockford Register Star*, 11-7-05, and *The Telegraph*, 11-04-05)

Making Eyes

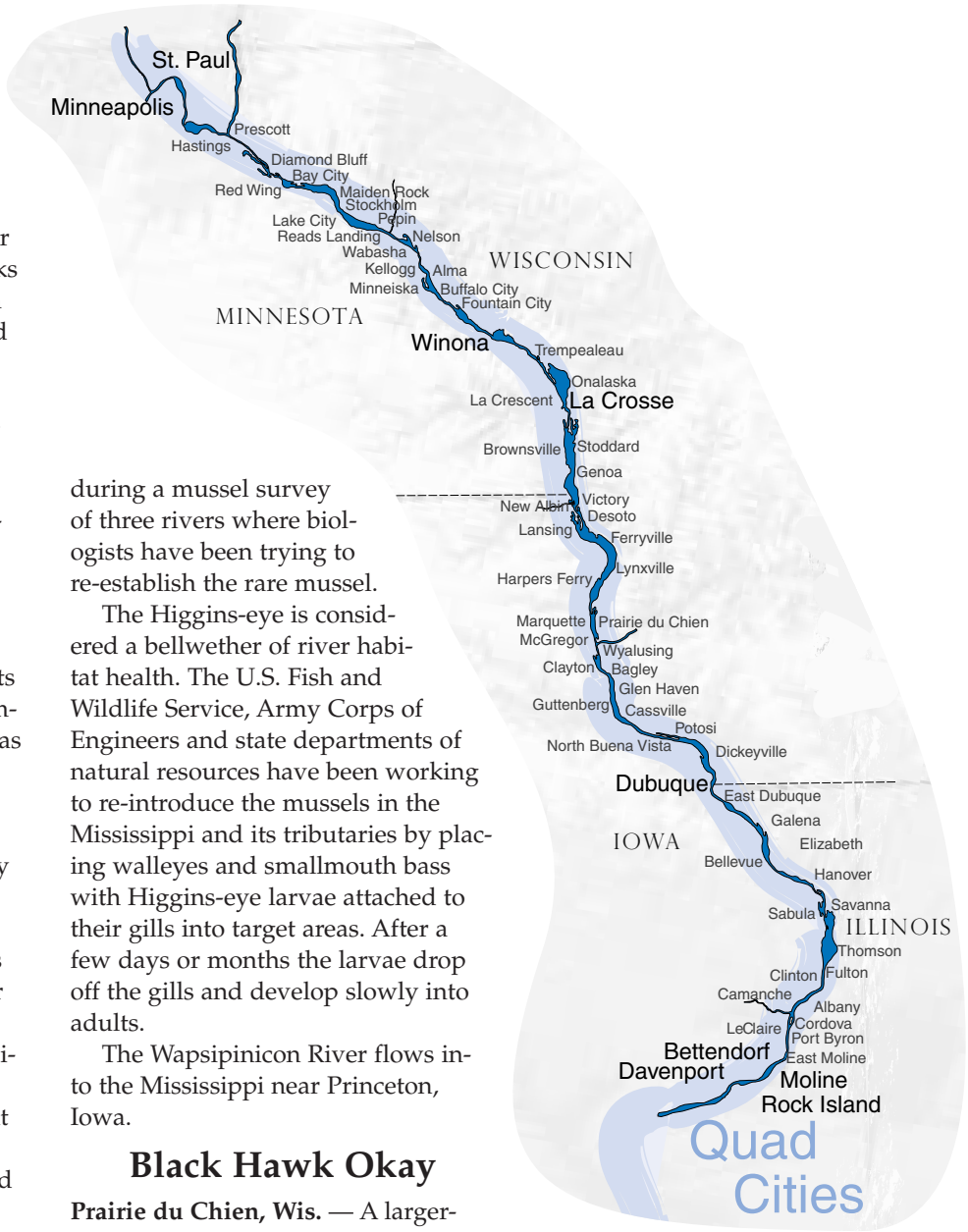
Linn County, Iowa — The first live Higgins-eye mussel discovered in interior waters of Iowa in 80 years was found in the Wapsipinicon River last summer and confirmed by genetic testing last fall, according to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

The three-inch mussel was found during a mussel survey of three rivers where biologists have been trying to re-establish the rare mussel.

The Higgins-eye is considered a bellwether of river habitat health. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Army Corps of Engineers and state departments of natural resources have been working to re-introduce the mussels in the Mississippi and its tributaries by placing walleyes and smallmouth bass with Higgins-eye larvae attached to their gills into target areas. After a few days or months the larvae drop off the gills and develop slowly into adults.

The Wapsipinicon River flows into the Mississippi near Princeton, Iowa.

Visit the Big River Home page (www.big-river.com) for links to information about stories marked with the mouse.



Black Hawk Okay

Prairie du Chien, Wis. — A larger-than-life-sized sculpture of Black Hawk, the Sauk and Fox Indian leader of the early 1800s, has been restored to its place in the new Mississippi River Sculpture Park on St. Feriole Island. The $75,000 bronze sculpture, the first at the site, was ceremoniously unveiled in early October, then toppled just two weeks later by a vandal who apparently pushed it over with a vehicle. The vandal made the mistake of bragging about his feat at a local bar, within earshot of art-loving patrons who quickly reported him.

Now he's caught and Black Hawk is standing in the park again. The toppling did little damage to the piece.

Artist Florence Bird has been planning and promoting the idea of a sculpture park for many years. Eventually she hopes the park will include sculptures of 24 historic figures — people from prehistory and history who lived in or near Prairie du Chien — and a fire circle, where people can gather for arts events, music and storytelling.

Diamond on the River

La Crosse, Wis. — Pulitzer-prize winning author and researcher Jared Diamond will be the keynote speaker at the International Conference on Rivers in La Crosse, on June 25 to 28, 2006. Diamond, a professor of geography at the University of California-

Jared Diamond will be the keynote speaker at the International Conference on Rivers in La Crosse, on June 25 to 28, 2006.

Los Angeles, is the author of *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, and *Guns, Germs and Steel*, which won a Pulitzer Prize.

Prominent environmental historian Donald Worster, of the University of Kansas, is also scheduled to speak.

The conference will showcase multidisciplinary perspectives on the river, including literature and arts about rivers, rivers in mythology and religion, restoration of historical riverfronts, human influences on river basins, contemporary water resource use, and other topics. It is sponsored by the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium, and the Smithsonian Institution.

The first International Conference on Rivers was held in 2002 in Dubna, Russia, which is on the Volga River. The second was at Assiut University, Egypt, on the Nile River in 2003.

Flea Antifreeze

Kingston, Ontario — The survival of snow fleas, tiny beetles so small they look like fresh pepper grated on the snow, has long been a mystery. As cold-blooded creatures, they shouldn't be able to jump around at sub-freezing temperatures, yet they live in temperate regions all over the world, from the glaciers of Patagonia to the frozen Upper Mississippi. (See *Big River*, January-February 2005.)

Now scientists at Queen's University have discovered the snow fleas' secret: a protein that lowers the freezing point of liquids by about 11 degrees Fahrenheit.

The discovery may prove useful in organ transplants. Today, donated organs have to be stored at or above 32 degrees Fahrenheit to stay viable. Storage at lower temperatures could prolong organ viability.

Although other creatures also produce antifreeze proteins, the snow fleas' proteins have an advantage for use in organ transplantation: the proteins break down easily when they warm up, so the substance would be quickly cleared from the organ.

Pilot Knob Preserved

Mendota Heights, Minn. — Eight and a half acres of a hill that was and still is sacred to the Dakota Indians will remain an undeveloped prairie with a few trails running across it, now that the city of Mendota Heights agreed to contribute $400,000 toward

Letter to the Editor

While glancing through my new copy of Big River *magazine this morning I was startled to learn of your enjoyment of the consequences of global warming. I don't need global warming to enjoy the river for 10 extra days each autumn and spring. Are lilacs sweeter when they come 10 days earlier? One could make a convincing case to the contrary, that the long wait for the glories of May seem to intensify their joys. Is autumn better when the first flurries have been forestalled for two weeks? I think not. In what way is being able to be in shirtsleeves deeper into the autumn an improvement on the experiences of that lonely, bittersweet season?*

No, let them wear shirtsleeves all year, as far as I'm concerned, in those red southern states where I always assumed the less vigorous weather made for less vigorous constitutions.

Give me the bracing air of a blustery November wind any day, the tingling smell of snow on the edge of the wind, the cold crunching of leaves underfoot while the honking geese fly overhead. Give me the meteorological slap on the cheek and the return to the truly warm hearth. Give me the delayed gratification of lilacs in May in Minnesota, the sheer ecstasy of the returning warmth, which we greet with the drunken enthusiasm of sailors returning to port after being too long at sea.

Fie on global warming, I say! Fie on the softening of autumn and the quicker return to warm weather! That's for pantywaists. I'll take my Octobers edgy, thank you, and my Novembers blustery. I'll take my Januarys bone chilling and my Mays intoxicating!

Harpo Kendrick
Minneapolis

the purchase of the $1.9 million site.

Other funds will come from Dakota County, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Trust for Public Land, a nonprofit organization.

Overlooking the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, the bluff was called "Oheyawahi," or "the hill much visited" by the Dakota. It was a burial and meeting site. The Treaty of 1851, in which the Indians ceded 35 million acres of land to the U.S. government, was signed there.

The bluff was a quiet place until private developers proposed building 157 luxury townhouses on it three years ago, which spurred a coalition of Indians, preservationists and historians to take action.

The remaining 91.5 acres on the hill is owned by Minnstar Builders, Inc., who may still try to develop it. Opponents say the issues they raised apply to the whole area.

Big Fish, Big Money

Hastings, Minn. — Trout and other residents of the Vermillion River, which runs through some of the fastest-developing areas south of the Twin Cities and enters the Mississippi between Hastings and Red Wing, Minn., should benefit from a $675,000 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), awarded in November.

The money will go to the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization, which was formed in 2002 as a two-county agency. The organization will match the grant with its own $250,000.

The EPA praised the organization for being proactive in creating new land-use regulations and water runoff protection in the early stages of a residential housing boom.

The Vermillion has been growing some big trout lately — up to 27 inches long, according to the Twin Cities

Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

New development standards will let developers build on some desirable sites in exchange for building ponds and other water-holding areas on property that is not so desirable. Such ponds and basins will collect runoff waters and hold them long enough to cool off before seeping into the river. Runoff that comes directly from roads, roofs and driveways is not just polluted, but it warms up the stream, destroying habitat for cold water-loving trout.

Wild Trail

Hastings, Minn. — Dakota County is assembling land for a trail that will pass through a state-owned wild tract with a stunning view of the Mississippi River.

The tract, Pine Bend Bluffs Scientific and Natural Area, overlooks the Mississippi at a great bend in the river where viewers can see barge traffic and other vessels.

Minnesota's scientific and natural areas typically don't have established trails. The trail through Pine Bend Bluffs will be part of a regional trail system that runs throughout the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

You'll have to wait a while: Dakota County's $881,600 grant is for 2010. "But we're in the queue and we've been approved for funding for the trail," said Steve Sullivan, Dakota County parks director. "It's going to happen."

Most of the proposed Mississippi River Regional Trail in Dakota County is on existing public land, including right of way and parks, or is available via easements that won't take away from the tax base, said Sullivan. Trails, he said, are "desirable community assets" that raise property values.

Oak forests cover most of the 185-acre Pine Bend Bluffs Scientific and Natural Area in Inver Grove Heights, Minn., from riverbank to the tops of its 200-foot bluffs. The area features prairie, native white pine and wildflowers, including hepatica, bloodroot and wild ginger.

More than 130 designated scientific and natural areas "preserve and perpetuate the ecological diversity of Minnesota's natural heritage," according to the Department of Natural Resources.

Road to the Past

Cassville, Wis. — Historic Stonefield Village, a state-operated agricultural museum and reconstructed village of the early 1900s, has been named an official Great River Road museum by the Mississippi River Parkway Commission. The honor will boost visibility and marketing of the museum.

The site joins a network of 58 museums and interpretive centers along the Great River Road, from the headwaters to the Gulf. Others include the Gateway Arch in St. Louis; the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium in Dubuque, Iowa; and the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale, Miss.

This summer residence on the grounds of Stonefield Village was built in 1893. Some of the outbuildings remain from governor Nelson Dewey's earlier residence. (Stonefield Village)

Stonefield Village includes 30 reconstructed buildings typical of a rural farm community of the early 1900s; an agricultural museum that hosts the state's largest collection of farm tools, models and machinery; and a restored summer home built in the 1890s. It is also the site of a home built by Wisconsin's first governor, Nelson Dewey, in the late 1860s and early 1870s.

Dewey was a lawyer who first settled in the area when steamboats were the best and fastest mode of travel. He pushed hard for Cassville to become the state capitol, a proposal that lost to Madison by only one vote. In 1848, at the age of 35, he was elected governor and served two terms, before returning to Cassville to take on a number of development projects.

Let Them Eat Carp

Moline, Ill. — An Illinois senator, intent on solving the problem of the invasive Asian carp, is suggesting it be turned into food for prisoners.

"We have to find an end use for this fish," said state Sen. Mike Jacobs, D-Moline. "I think that this is a home-grown problem, and this is a home-grown solution."

In January, Jacobs will propose a private-public venture to create and fill a market for Asian carp.

Mike Schafer, owner of Thomson-based Schafer's Fisheries Inc., the Midwest's largest wholesale supplier of fish, is considering several options: a protein extraction plant, frozen fish patties or vacuum-packed carp.

"It's a very low-cost protein source," Schafer said of Asian carp. Last year, his company shipped one million pounds of Asian carp, and he expects to sell 50 percent more this year.

The Asian carp was first imported to the U.S. in the 1970s by private fish farmers in Arkansas, said Ed Britton, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services district manager in Savanna, Ill. In the early 1980s, some escaped the fish farms into the Mississippi River.

"I know this is an odd political issue," Jacobs said. "This is not really a sexy issue, but it is highly important."

"When they got into the river and were no longer confined, they began competing with the native species," Britton said. "These Asian carp are much heartier than our native species. They reproduce faster, eat more, grow bigger. They can outcompete our native species. They can tolerate colder temperatures. They

A third-generation fisherman, Orion Briney, shows off two Asian carp he caught on the Illinois River last summer during a Living Lands & Waters educational workshop. When Briney revved his boat's engine the carp jumped out of the water — a spectacle one described as fireworks. (Abbie Reese)

can tolerate higher currents. It's an ecological disaster."

In a sampling of the backwaters on the Illinois River several years ago, 98 percent of the fish were Asian carp, said Kevin Irons, a large-river ecologist with Illinois Natural History, a division of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources in Havana. Commercial fishermen have told him they believe other fish species on the Illinois River are thinning, but Irons said he hasn't seen a significant decline in other species yet.

"I know this is an odd political issue," Jacobs said. "This is not really a sexy issue, but it is highly important."

Jacobs said he will also support any effort to have the Asian carp listed as a "Title Three" food source for humanitarian food aid world-wide.

aka Herman

East Carondelet, Ill. — The towboat *Herman Pott*, which gained more than the average towboat's measure of fame and recognition by appearing as *River King* in the television movie "The Rivermen" in 1974, has been renamed the *Richard E. Waugh*. Waugh is a bank exec to whom Ingram Barge Company apparently felt grateful or indebted, or both.

The 168-foot towboat was built in 1973 and was a frequent traveler in the Upper Miss.

Home Delivery

Baton Rouge, La. — Houses don't usually float down the river, in barges or outside of them, so media coverage was abundant when Habitat for Humanity asked volunteers in several river cities to load house frames on barges and send them downriver to hurricane-devastated areas in the Gulf.

(River News continued on page 30)

Nate and Jeff returned with green heads after a hunt in the Weaver Bottoms, 11-25-2005. (This issue's Readers' Photo was sent in by Craig and Judy of Wabasha, Minn.)

Your Photos Wanted!

In this issue of *Big River*, we're starting something new — a river lovers' photo contest that's open to everyone, amateur and professional alike. Send river photographs you think other readers would like to see, and if we select your photo to print in these pages, we'll send you five free copies of the magazine to share with your friends.

The photographs can be of anything river-related — kids on the beach; boys returning from a hunt; lotus flowers; waterskiiers, campers, boaters, birders; an old cabin on a slough; or even a beaver doing a headstand on a lodge. They don't have to be seasonal. In other words, we may print summer pictures in the winter and vice versa.

Email a JPEG (.jpg) photo file from your digital camera —high resolution photos only, please — to pam@big-river.com, or send a print to Photo Editor, Big River, P.O. Box 204, Winona, MN 55987. (We cannot return photographs, though.)

Send your name, address, a daytime phone number and a short description of the photograph — who or what it is, when and where it was taken, etc.

The deadline for the March-April issue is January 20, 2006.

The deadline for May-June is March 20, 2006.

River Rescue and Recovery

From the Murky Depths to the Rocky Bluffs

By Julie Johnson

On the surface, the Mississippi River changes color with the mood of the sky. But under the surface everything goes dark, visibility drops to near zero. A diving light is practically useless, as its beam reflects off floating particles of sediment, much as fog reflects car headlights.

The Winona County Dive Rescue Team in Winona, Minn., has spent a lot of time in the murky depths and dangerous currents of the river. The channels and backwaters of the Mississippi are a sporting and spiritual wilderness for many, but they also have a deadly side. When people get in trouble and call for help with drownings, driverless boats, a missing skier, overdue hunters or children fallen off docks, the Dive Rescue Team responds.

The all-volunteer team formed in 1983. Now 20 members strong, it consists of three women and 17 men, with an average of 10 years experience each. The team combines both water rescue and recovery with specialized high-angle cliff rescue skills.

Roy Hazelton, a team founder and owner of Hazelton Scuba Shop in Winona, said that he learned dive and rescue from the school of hard knocks. "Now, I'd match these people's skills against any of the big-city dive operations," he said.

Founding volunteers may have learned by trial and error, but they've achieved professional status by training with the International Association of Dive Rescue Specialists, and going on to author their own surface dive rescue course, which is approved by the Professional Association of Diving Instructors.

The team's reputation has spread. It has been called to to neighboring counties up, down and across the river; to Grand Forks, N.D., during the "100 year flood;" and to Cresco, Iowa, to help rescue a man trapped 165 feet inside a cave.

The dark water can rattle a diver's mind, especially if the water tastes dirty, and you can't hear anything but your own breath.

The team considers Winona a sister city to La Crosse, Wis., and Rochester, Minn., which also have dive teams. These three teams occasionally train together and offer each other mutual aid.

Team members volunteer their time and are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. They purchase their own diving and climbing gear. Most team members also pay for their initial training, back-up ham radios, climbing equipment and global positioning system (GPS) devices.

The team operates under the direction of the Winona County Sheriff, but its budget relies on both public and private donations. Big-ticket items, such as the rescue vehicle and one boat, were privately donated. The county provides maintenance, a heated garage for gear, pagers and two-way radios.

Many team members began diving recreationally with lessons at the Y.M.C.A. or at a tropical resort. They participate in the team for at least two reasons: to hone their skills and to serve the community.

"Most people on the team believe every person needs to give one thing to their community, whether it's leading scouts, hospital auxiliary or rescue work," explained team leader, Russ Marsolek.

Dark Waters

The divers agree that frequent dives in the river help them learn to maintain their composure under water. In zero visibility, touch becomes the primary sense. Divers often swim slowly along the bottom, feeling their way through swirling sediment. Judd Stanislawski, diver and team equipment manager, described a sand-pit

lake bottom with about four feet of visibility. For a while, he could still see sunlight above. As he swam deeper he approached a silt line that deepened and enveloped him in a rolling cloud as black as copy toner. He remained in the black cloud, searching shoulder deep in organic matter on a sweep across the basin of the lake.

The dark water can rattle a diver's mind, especially if the water tastes dirty, and you can't hear anything but your own breath. Sound travels well in water, but divers often only hear their own breathing or their own conversations. Every diver has his or her own technique for coping. Marsolek sings to himself. Instead of straining to see through muddy water, which he can't, he often relaxes, closes his eyes and completely feels his way. Stanislawski talks to himself. Josephine Dobson, a new diver, says it's very surreal, yet special to be suspended in water. "I have a high amount of trust in the person controlling my rope."

"Everybody on the team has held everybody else's life in their hands in one way or another."

Rescue diving depends on the buddy system. The diver is always connected by a rope to a surface partner. Since a diver might have to go across ice, under ice, in strong currents and into complete darkness, the rope is a literal life line. Although the team has some face-mask communication devices, they usually rely on the simpler code of rope communication.

One tug by the surface partner asks, "Are you okay?" One tug by the diver answers, "I'm okay." Two tugs mean, "Give me slack" or "Take up slack." Three tugs mean, "Pull me up" or I'm pulling you up."

"Everybody on the team has held everybody else's life in their hands in one way or another," said team member Gary Eddy.

Above: Divers dredged up a bunch of bikes on training day off the Levee in Winona. (Julie Johnson)

Previous page: A diver's light is only a glimmer in the Mississippi. (Russ Marsolek)

A Step Too Far

The rocky bluffs lining the river also beckon adventurers. When somebody, or some dog, takes a step too far, the team is called on for "vertical rescues" involving ropes and skilled climbers.

Once, when team member Brian Buerck was about to rappel down to a barking dog stranded on a ledge below, he asked the owner what the dog's name was. The owner replied, "Chompers." Buerck rescued the dog anyway.

An 80-foot blufftop knob of limestone in Winona called "Sugar Loaf" has proven irresistible and dangerous to numerous people over the years and has been the scene of many rescues.

Once a group of teens climbed the rock only to realize they didn't have the skill to climb back down. The rescue team climbed up and rappelled them down, one by one.

Other climbers have fallen, suffering broken limbs and serious injuries. In these cases, the team provides emergency medical services and evacuation.

Searching in the Dark

When searching in the dark for something relatively small, like a person, any body of water seems vast, and the search can require countless, repeated sweeps and relocations. A few times, Stanislawski said, he's grabbed what he thought was a tree branch only to have a fish slither out of his hands. When surprised, he stops for a moment and calms his breathing. He has never recovered a body and wonders how he'd maintain his cool if he did.

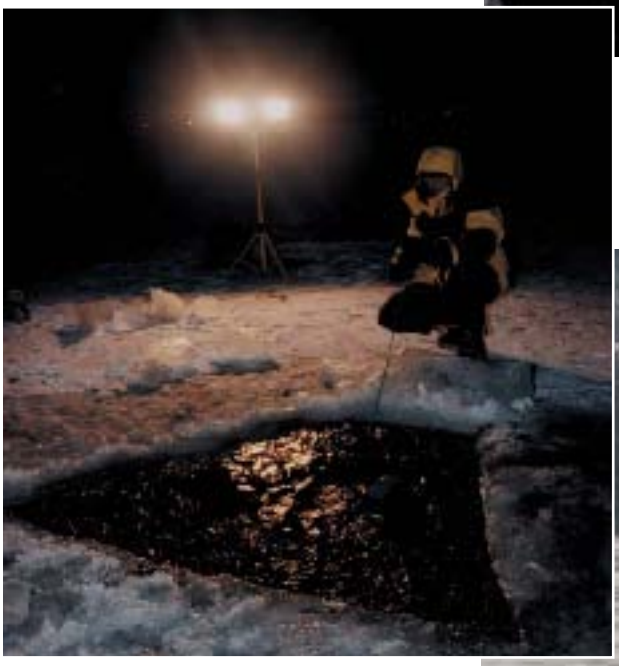
Marsolek has recovered 13 bodies. At the end of these intense underwater searches, his initial reaction has been "Yes!" — a sense of relief to help

provide closure for the survivors.

"Honestly, out of 13, I've never looked at a face" he admitted.

While searching in dark water, Marsolek has put his hand around what felt like an arm, only to find that it was a tree branch. Now, if he finds what could be an arm, he'll walk his way to the end of it. If it has fingers, he'll put his arm around the waist and tug three times on his rope. Once on shore, he releases the body and walks away.

Everybody deals with the stress of rescue and recovery scenes in their own way. Marsolek tends to be quiet for about three days afterwards.



Above: A rescue climber trains on the bluffs. (Russ Marsolek)

Left: A team member prepares for a night dive in Lake Winona. (Russ Marsolek)

Below: A winter search party gets assistance from the air. (Russ Marsolek)

Like other rescue professionals, the team can receive confidential debriefing sessions from the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team, a branch of the Southeast Minnesota Emergency Medical Services (EMS) organization. Sometimes the stress from rescue experiences leaves a lasting impression and produces strong emotional reactions in EMS personnel. Although these reactions are normal, they can cause serious physical and emotional side effects. An individual or group debriefing led by a CISM team can help rescue workers cope.

In addition to rescuing people and animals, the team also leads educational sessions for schools and organizations in the Winona area. Their main water safety message: use life jackets.

"With the exception of people trapped in a vehicle, every single drowning the team has responded to would not have been a drowning if the person had worn a life jacket," Marsolek said.

A bit of humor and playfulness counterbalances some of the danger and seriousness of the Dive and Rescue Team's work. A few divers enjoy upside-down scuba ice skiing. One diver dons a dry suit, air tank and 150-feet of rope, then drops through a hole in the ice and swims out to extend the length of the rope. Then the diver rotates feet-side-up and puts some air into the dry suit. Buoyancy holds the diver's feet to the bottom side of the ice. Three tugs on the rope signals the surface buddy to pull the skier along the glassy underside of the ice until he or she pops up out of the hole.

Julie Johnson is a writer who lives in the Winona area. She is a First Responder and a regular contributor to River News. Her last feature story was "The Tug-of-War Over Riverboat Gambling" May-June 2005.

Alternative E

The A, B, C, D and Es of Managing the Upper Miss Refuge

By Reggie McLeod

After coming under fire from hunters and campers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has backed off on some of its proposals for managing the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge for the next 15 years. A few new electric motor areas and no-hunting zones may survive the process, but most proposed new restrictions on hunting and camping were dropped from the plan. A new proposal for seasonal no-wake areas has been added to the plan.

The planning process for the Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement began in 2002 and is scheduled for completion in 2006. Four proposals, labeled Alternative A, B, C and D, were hammered out at public meetings. They assumed four different goals: no action; wildlife focus; public-use focus; and integrated wildlife and public-use focus. Although the preferred Plan D was presented as a compromise, it was hit with opposition. At a series of public meetings last spring and summer, many hunters, airboat owners and campers pushed for no action or less ambitious changes (see "Should We Change Our River?" *Big River*, July-August 2005). The FWS took the feedback from those meetings in addition to 2,438 written comments and six petitions with more than 3,000 signatures and went back to the drawing board. In early December it released Alternative E.

At a series of public meetings last spring and summer, many hunters, airboat owners and campers pushed for no action or less ambitious changes.

The refuge stretches along 261 miles of the river, encompassing about 240,000 acres from Wabasha, Minn., (Pool 4) to Rock Island, Ill., (Pool 15). Many of the boat landings and most of the islands and sandbars on this stretch of the river are the responsibility of the refuge, which is managed by the FWS.

The major changes from Alternative D to Alternative E include:

- dropping three of the proposed six new no-hunting zones near public-use facilities;
- changing the boundaries of several proposed waterfowl hunting closed areas;
- dropping the proposed 25-shell daily limit and 100-yard spacing for duck hunters;
- proposing six rather than 17 electric-motor areas, but adding eight seasonal "slow, no-wake" areas where airboats and hovercraft would also be banned. However, restrictions on the "slow, no-wake" areas would be lifted from November 1 to March 16, during hunting and trapping seasons.
- loosening restrictions for "no fishing, no motors" areas to accommodate late-season fishing;
- dropping camping area restrictions and proposed alcohol and human waste regulations;
- adding a ban on glass containers; and
- dropping a proposed launch fee at refuge managed boat ramps.

The hunting regulations aimed to protect migrating ducks and reduce hunting pressure in some areas, while increasing the number of ducks and hunter success.

The six proposed "electric-motor" areas will be closed to other types of motors, but open to paddlers. These areas are generally in backwaters in the upper end of pools, encompassing a total of 1,719 acres. They are intended to protect wildlife and encourage silent sports. There is currently only one electric-motor area, near a blue heron rookery across the Main Channel from Winona, Minn.

Both alternative D and E would increase canoe trails, hiking trails and fishing piers in the refuge.

Some state officials objected to Alternative D, claiming that the federal government was infringing on the powers of the states to regulate hunting, trapping, fishing and boating. Most of the challenged proposals were changed in Alternative E, and new language refers to "one-stop-shopping" for permits and cooperating with states.

Nine open houses in January (see "River Calendar") will give people the opportunity to learn more about the plan and to comment on it. The 60-day comment period on the plan ends February 3, 2006. Written comments can be submitted at the plan web site or by mailing them to: Upper Mississippi River NW&FR, Attn: CCP Comment, 51 E. Fourth St., Rm. 101, Winona, MN 55987.

The entire plan is available on the Refuge web site, at public libraries in river communities near the refuge, at the refuge headquarters in Winona, and at district offices in La Crosse, Wis., McGregor, Iowa, and Savanna, Ill.

An ice spearfisherman stands next to his tent-style darkhouse. (Courtesy of Murphy Library, University of Wisconsin - La Crosse)

Spearing Fish
Through the Ice

This once-vital river fishing tradition centered on La Crosse. All that's left today are antique decoys and handcrafted tools.

By Ron Deiss

Ice spearfishing is one of the oldest, most traditional methods for harvesting fish during the winter months. Although it's illegal on the river today, it was practiced on the Upper Mississippi River for more than 1,000 years.

It's a simple pursuit. All that's required is a big hole in the ice (two to three feet in diameter); a dark cover over the hole to keep the light out; a fish-shaped decoy on a line; a sharp spear; hand-eye coordination and patience.

Today, while ice spearfishing enthusiasts go to the lakes of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan to fish, historians and antique collectors hunt for old decoys and spears that were once made and used in an area of the river known to fishermen as the La Crosse Reach.

From Teepees to Darkhouses

For Indians in the Upper Mississippi and Great Lakes regions, ice spearfishing was an important source of fresh food in winter. Archeologists have found approximately 40 decoys made of mussel shells from archeological sites within these major areas. Quite a few of them come from near La Crosse, Wis., and Harpers Ferry, Iowa, and are more than 1,000 years old.

French and British traders recorded that many tribes of the Upper Midwest traditionally spearfished on the ice within teepee-shaped shelters, using wooden spears and mussel-shell decoys.

Their tools changed when lead mining and smelting began along the Upper Mississippi River in the early 1700s and the Winnebago, Fox, Sac, and Iowa learned these smelting arts. During the last half of the 18th century, the Indians stopped using their traditional shell decoys and started using wooden decoys inlaid with lead ballast. Throughout this period, Indians traded lead, furs, tallow, and other goods to Europeans in exchange for iron tines and spears.

"Of all the queer forms of fishing — and there are many of them — that of "gigging," which is being practiced extensively about La Crosse just at present, is undoubtedly the funniest."

Settlers learned spearfishing from the Indians and it increased in popularity throughout the 1800s.

In an 1859 letter sent from the rivertown of Red Wing, Minn., a pioneer wrote: "We have a coy [decoy] fish fashioned of wood, tin fins. We let it through a hole cut through the ice with a string fastened. The real fish fancy they are going to have a good meal and make for the coy. Then we pick them out with the spear."

In the late 1800s, a small, rectangular, framed shelter called a darkhouse, named for its pitch-black interior, be-

This Northern Pike decoy, painted with Allis-Chalmers Tractor Manufacturing Company's "Persian Orange" paint, dates from the years shortly after 1929. (Freyermuth)

This small minnow decoy has glass bead eyes, inked scales and multiple hangers. (Freyermuth)

Sporting mussel shell button eyes and tin fins, this sucker fish decoy is made of natural white pine. (Freyermuth)

This brown trout decoy sports gold glass bead eyes and three staple hangers. (Freyermuth)

These jigging sticks in various shapes come from the La Crosse Reach area. (Deiss)

This decoy is of the straight, "simple," form. The lead weight on the top holds the bar. Note the heavily carved mouth and gills. A jigging stick is attached. (Freyermuth)

This minnow decoy from La Crosse, Wis., has a bar hanger on the top, as well as fins of metal. (Freyermuth)

came popular. The darkhouse had room for a seat, a small heating stove and spearing equipment, including a saw or spud, which is the basic tool for chopping holes in ice, a chipper to shape the edges, and a skimmer to remove floating debris.

The La Crosse Reach

Ice spearfishing was especially popular in the area known as the La Crosse Reach from the 19th century until it was prohibited in the late 1930s. The La Crosse Reach encompasses the western border of Wisconsin, and the eastern border of Minnesota and Iowa, and consists of approximately 200 miles of channels and backwaters between the towns of Prescott, Wis., and Cassville, Wis.

La Crosse, Wis., was the hub of ice spearfishing activities in the Reach, possibly because of the record fish harvests there between 1895 and 1899.

Town-dwellers enthusiastically took up ice spearfishing as a sport or commercial venture. A photograph in the Wisconsin Historical Society archives, dating from the 1880s, depicts an ice spear fisherman fashionably dressed with his catch, spear, and decoy.

In 1895, the *La Crosse Daily Press* printed an article titled, "Gigging for Fish: A Popular Pastime Among Men of Leisure Just Now."

"Of all the queer forms of fishing — and there are many of them — that of "gigging," which is being practiced extensively about La Crosse just at present, is undoubtedly the funniest. No less than one hundred persons now follow the sport hereabouts, and the bulk of the fish monger's stock at this time is supplied from that source.... The fish are easily seen at a depth of fully ten feet, and, at this time of the year, when food is scarce, they are easily decoyed to the hole in the ice. In the night time, reflectors are used to light up the water about the holes."

From the 1890s to the late 1930s, ice spearfishing evolved a distinct style in the La Crosse Reach, suited to the area's braided channels and complex backwaters full of seaps and springs.

La Crosse Reach darkhouses were typically small, which made them easier to store, heat and carry on small sleds.

Spears, jigging sticks, and other equipment were also small, on a scale to suit the smaller darkhouses. Jigging sticks were fashioned from branches, but many were turned, carved, and shaped to reflect personal tastes. Spear owners took pride in the highly finished spears, spuds, and chippers with turned handles and brass fittings, all made locally.

Before electric tools, all these tools were made by hand and many show great care and art invested in their making. This is especially true of the fish decoys, which are now recognized as a form of folk art, attracting avid collectors.

Local Carving, Local Art

There were approximately 60 decoy carvers in the La Crosse Reach whose names are known. They made decoys of basswood, cedar, and maple, which grew in abundance in the surrounding hills and valleys. Decoys were typically between four to six inches long and realistic in appearance.

Most have eyes made of commercial beads, hatpins and buttons. Glass trade beads and mussel shell buttons tacked onto the decoy with small nails or pins were most popular. Beads could be easily purchased, and mussel shell button factories first built in the late 19th century were located in nearly every river city, including La Crosse.

La Crosse Reach decoys are heavily weighted. Bar, inchworm, pigtail and other types of ordinary fish lure hangers were used as weights to allow for adjustments to decoy balance in changing water flows.

Decoy fins were cut from brass, copper, and steel.

Both straight (simple) and curved (complex) decoys were carved for different swimming patterns and river conditions. Simple decoys have a straight profile along the length and are jigged with the decoy facing into the current. Since faster current usually means turbid water, these decoys were often painted silver, light grey, white to increase visibility in turbid water.

Decoys with a curved profile along the length, allowing for a forward spiral swimming pattern, were used in the slow current of the backwaters. The decoys used in these translucent, tranquil back channels were painted in more detailed and colorful paint schemes.

La Crosse carvers developed decoys specially for the Mississippi River, which has current, unlike lakes. They are weighted down in front in a way that makes them look like they're swimming in a circle as they sink and rise.

Stylistically, the decoys from the La

Ice Spearfishing — A Match of Wits

By Ron Deiss

Ice spearfishing has a different feeling from the feeling of angling. You definitely think of the fish as a respected opponent.

With your decoy swimming in the water below, you jig the decoy up and down to attract any curious muskies or northern pike that may be swimming in the area. Decoys seem to be very attractive to the aggressive fish.

It's a match of wits between you and the fish. Does your decoy look convincing? Can you move it in a way that imitates a real fish?

You wait and wait, and if the fish lines up directly below your spear, you give a short jab, rather like spearing a pickle, and the spear descends swiftly through the water. If you get the fish, there's a great satisfaction. It's not that easy to spear a fish that may be six or seven or even 10 feet below you and set at an angle. After you strike you pull up the spear, which is tied to a line, and if you're lucky a fish comes with it.

Curved, "complex," decoys were used in the quiet backwaters of the river. (Freyermuth)

Straight, "simple," decoys were used in the turbid Main Channel of the river. (Freyermuth)

A sunfish decoy made in La Crosse, Wis., has a finely carved body, but no eyes. (Freyermuth)

Glass hatpin heads were used for the eyes of this small trout decoy. (Freyermuth)

Crosse Reach exhibit excellent and precise craftsmanship, attention to detail, and realistic carving of nearly all river fish species. Many fish decoys are finely painted by blending, sponging, and stippling.

Local paints were from La Crosse industries. For example, in 1901 the Allis-Chalmers tractor manufacturing company used dark green paint and a few decoys exhibit this color. In 1929 the company switched to "Persian Orange" tractor paint and many decoys followed suit.

Controversy and Regulation

Meanwhile, by the 1870's declining fisheries resources became an important topic on the river, and in 1871, the office of the United States Commissioners of Fish and Fisheries was established to monitor this loss. In 1874, the states of Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin set up their first fish commissions.

As the decline continued into the first decades of the 20th century, regulation of ice spearfishing in the La Crosse Reach was inevitable. Non-native species, pollution, and river and railroad improvements are now known to have been the real culprits, but at the time suspicions hovered around ice spearfishing.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, many unemployed people depended on river fish for food and small profit, yet ice spearfishing continued to be associated with over-harvesting and commercial marketing. By 1937, the Minnesota and Wisconsin conservation commissioners adopted joint provisions declaring ice spearfishing illegal in all boundary waters, completely closing the La Crosse Reach to one of its oldest methods of harvesting fish.

(Jigging is simply a fishing technique by which a lure is repeatedly jerked up and down in the water. It is not illegal.)

Although ice spearfishing is legal in Alaska, the Dakotas, Montana, Michigan and areas of Minnesota and Wisconsin that are not boundary waters, the controversy and opposition to ice spearfishing continues throughout much of the Upper Midwestern Great Lakes region. And it has never again been made legal on the Upper Mississippi.

Since the mid-1980s enthusiasts have formed ice spearfishing associations to support ice spearfishing, facilitate fish decoy collecting, and promote traditional and competitive carving. Several popular publications focus on spearfishing, spears, fish decoys, carvers, trends, and regional styles.

In 1989, the Museum of American Folk Art in New York opened the first major show on early fish decoys. This exhibit was widely acclaimed at seven museums during its two-year tour. Although ice spearfishing has been viewed with controversy, the last decades have seen a growing appreciation for its history and traditions.

Ron Deiss is an archeologist with the Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District. He enjoys spearfishing where it's legal and he carves his own decoys, besides collecting antique decoys.

Zeb Pike

The Unlikely Adventurer

By Duke Addicks

Two hundred years ago, in 1805, two years after President Thomas Jefferson purchased the Louisiana Territory from Napoleon Bonaparte, a young lieutenant in the U.S. Army was ordered to do four things that would dramatically change the Upper Mississippi River by preparing the way for its settlement:

- go up the Mississippi River and discover its source;
- tell the British fur traders and the American Indians in the area that they were now subject to the American government;
- acquire land for at least two forts; and
- make peace between the Ojibwa and the Sioux (Dakota), who had been at war with each other for decades.

He had nine months to accomplish all of this.

Zebulon Montgomery Pike was just 26 with only a few years' schooling. Since joining the army at age 15, his experience had been limited to purchasing and arranging for the shipping of goods by boat. He'd had no experience at exploration. He didn't make friends easily, and spent hours by himself studying French, Spanish and mathematics. But he was ambitious, performed his duties well and advanced through the ranks rapidly, becoming a first lieutenant at age 21.

After Pike received his orders in late June of 1805, he went to St. Louis, where he chose 20 soldiers to go with him, and designed and had built a narrow, very sturdy, 70-foot-long keelboat.

A keelboat's design is simple. It has a flat bottom, with planks for the sides. It has no deck, but along the sides were walkways for the men who poled the boat. Toward the back was a shelter for supplies, where a few soldiers could go in bad weather.

Sometimes they sailed, sometimes they rowed, but most often they poled the heavy keelboat upriver.

The sail was mounted in the middle. When the wind was slack or from the wrong direction, the boat was rowed or poled.

Pike started upriver on August 9, not quite seven weeks after receiving his orders. He kept a journal, and in it recorded his daily mileage, what he experienced, his encounters with traders and Indians, and whatever else he thought might be important to the American government. The publication of this journal eventually brought him fame.

Pike was in a hurry. He assumed he had to travel well over a thousand miles up the river, and he wanted to find the source of the Mississippi before it froze and snow covered everything. Frequent storms and unfavorable winds slowed his progress. The river was low, so he and his men often had to push or drag the heavy keelboat over sandbars separating the pools of water that were all that remained of the mighty Mississippi in the autumn. Sometimes they sailed, sometimes they rowed, but most often they poled the heavy keelboat upriver.

North of the mouth of the Rock River, on the west side of the Mississippi just above present-day Davenport, Iowa, Pike met British fur trader James Aird. Aird suggested that Pike find Aird's brother-in-law, the Dakota Chief Wapasha II, who was well respected by the Indians throughout the Upper Mississippi. Wapasha was about Pike's age, and had succeeded his father, the Great Chief Wapasha, who had been a British general in the Revolutionary War.

At Prairie du Chien, Wis., where the Wisconsin River flowed into the Mississippi and where fur traders met their suppliers at a rendezvous every year, Pike established the sites for two forts, one on each side of the Mississippi. One was at the Petit Gris about three miles up the Wisconsin River, near Bridgeport, and the other was the hilltop site of what is now Pike's Peak Park, above McGregor, Iowa. Here he also hired two interpreters and traded the heavy keelboat for two lighter boats easier to use in shallow water.

Near the mouth of the Upper Iowa River, Pike came to Chief Wapasha's village. In following Aird's advice, Pike made the major decision that defined his journey: He stopped at the

village, made friends with young Chief Wapasha and asked for his help.

Wapasha gave Pike his pipe, the symbol of his authority, and told Pike to take it to Chief Little Crow and ask for the chief's help. This Chief Little Crow was Hunts Sparrowhawks Walking, the third Dakota chief to be called Little Crow.

Farther upriver, Pike came across one of James Aird's partners, Murdoch Cameron, who guided him to Little Crow's village, Kaposia, which at that time was located on the east side of the Mississippi near where the Minnesota River, then called the Ste. Pierre, joined it. When Pike met Little Crow, they smoked Wapasha's pipe together. Because Pike seemed to have Wapasha's friendship, the chief reluctantly agreed that the United States could have roughly 100,000 acres at the mouth of the Minnesota River for the location of a fort.

Having accomplished one of his missions, Pike continued on up the Mississippi to accomplish the other three. In early December, Pike built a stockade near what is now Little Falls, Minn., where he left the boats and some of his men. He went ahead on foot, often falling into the partly frozen river, seldom going more than a few miles a day.

Pike visited traders' posts to declare that this was American territory now. At one post, he and his men, and some Ojibwa marksmen, shot down the Union Jack and hoisted the U.S. flag. However, after Pike left, the U.S. flag was quietly lowered and the British flag flown again.

In mid-February, Pike smoked Wapasha's pipe with the Ojibwa leaders of the Mississippi headwaters area, repeated the promise of Little Crow and other Dakota chiefs to cease warfare with the Ojibwa, and received their promise to do the same.

After he explored several frozen lakes, the British traders and Indians persuaded Pike that the source of the Mississippi was Upper Red Cedar Lake, now called Cass Lake, which was about 80 miles downriver from the true source, Lake Itasca.

On February 28, 1806, Pike and some of the Ojibwa chiefs started back to the Minnesota River, on the way retrieving the soldiers he had left at Little Falls. At the Minnesota River, the leaders of the Dakota and Ojibwa met and talked about peace. Then Pike and his men left for St. Louis, where they arrived on April 30.

Pike had traveled more than 2,000 miles under some of the most rugged conditions imaginable, and had managed to accomplish at least some of his goals.

He did make friends with the Indians, and tried to get them to agree to end their warfare, although the Ojibwa and the Dakota remained at war.

Pike became famous, not because he was an excellent soldier, which he was, but because of the stories he told about his adventures. His journal has been continuously in print since it was first published almost 200 years ago.

He did determine the location for several forts, and acquired land from the Indians for one of them. Two of the forts were eventually built, Fort Crawford at Prairie du Chien, and Fort Snelling above Pike Island where the Mississippi and Minnesota join.

He did tell British traders and Indians that the Upper Mississippi was now U.S. territory, although he predicted that another war would have to be fought to clearly establish American dominance north of St. Louis. This war, known to us as the War of 1812, did occur, and Pike fought in it.

Because the British misled him he failed to locate the true source of the Mississippi.

All of his men returned safely.

The Army supported the publication of his journals about the exploration of the Upper Mississippi and the Southwest. Pike became famous, not because he was an excellent soldier, which he was, but because of the stories he told about his adventures. His journal has been continuously in print since it was first published almost 200 years ago.

His journey up the Mississippi was just the beginning of his story. Almost immediately after returning to St. Louis, he was sent on another exploratory trip, this time into the Spanish-dominated country southwest of St. Louis. He and his men left St. Louis on July 15, 1806, and got as far as Colorado, where a peak is named after him (because of bad weather, he didn't climb all the way to its top). They were captured by the Spaniards and taken to Mexico before they were released. When he returned in 1807, he resumed his career as a soldier, again advancing rapidly.

By the start of the War of 1812, Pike had become a full colonel. By the time he led his troops in the decisive battle for York (Toronto) in April 1813, he had been appointed one of the youngest American brigadier-generals before or since. As the British army retreated from York and Pike led his soldiers across the battlefield to take command of the city, a gunpowder storage area exploded, killing him. He was 34.

His comrades preserved his body in whiskey until it could be buried on American soil.

News of his death spread rapidly. The nation mourned. President James Madison read Pike's eulogy before a joint session of Congress. Only a few times in the history of this nation has an American president honored someone in this way.

Had he lived, some historians believe Pike would have eventually been one of the leading contenders for the office of President of the United States. The Dakota and Ojibwa might have been treated quite differently had their friend lived to become President.

Duke Addicks tells Mississippi River Tales and is available to tell the full story of Zeb Pike during the bicentennial of his exploration of the Mississippi.

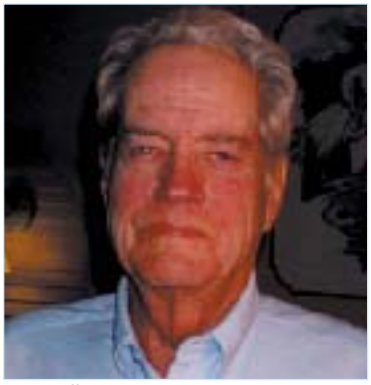
Portrait of Zebulon Pike by David Fox. It is part of the Captain William Bowell, Sr., Collection, which hangs in the National Rivers Hall of Fame, on display at the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium.

(Tom Kelley continued from page 36)

along the river.

"Kelley was talking to me about this 40 years ago," he recalled.

Mike Galvin, Jr., an attorney with Briggs and Morgan, in St. Paul, often worked with the county or the St. Paul Port Authority on land acquisitions along the river, such as Lilydale and Pickerel Lake, across the river and upstream from downtown St. Paul.


Tom Kelley

"Tom led the charge," Galvin said. "He was one of the earliest if not the earliest of the pioneers focusing on the river."

He remembers that Kelley had a houseboat built with wheels on it so that it could be towed without a trailer.

"I had an old pontoon boat on the river, so on weekends we'd bump into one another," he said.

Before the state gave local governments authority to raise money for recreational land, a group of St. Paul businessmen used to buy up parcels and hold them until the state could come up with the funds for them. Some of the land along the east bank of the river below Lock and Dam 1 became park land through this process. Galvin's boss, Sam Morgan was part of that group and later helped found the nonprofit Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota, which now does similar work.

"Tom led the charge," Galvin said. "He was one of the earliest if not the earliest of the pioneers focusing on the river."

When Peter Gove chaired the newly formed Mississippi River Corridor Commission in the early 1980s, Tom Kelly was one of the more active commissioners. The commission's work led to the creation of the Mississippi River National River and Recreation Area in 1988.

"He [Kelley] was one of the key people who led to the creation of the Mississippi River National River and Recreation Area," Gove said.

They worked closely with Congressman Bruce Vento and Senator Dave Durenberger to convince Congress to approve the designation.

MNRRA includes a 72-mile long segment of the river, from Dayton to Hastings, Minn., with the Twin Cities in the middle. It's administered by the National Park Service.

Gove also founded Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR), a nonprofit advocacy group concerned with the stretch of the river in MNRRA and is currently on the its board. He recently retired from his job as vice president of corporate relations for St. Jude Medical, Inc., in St. Paul. A long-time river activist, he headed the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency in the 1970s.

These days Kelley and his partner Kathy Stack have time to enjoy the parks and trails along the river. They live near the Mississippi River Boulevard Trail and Hidden Falls Park, where they often go for picnics. Stack also helped build the park system in St. Paul; one of several jobs she held for the city was heading up the Community Services Department, which oversees the parks. They are both members of FMR, and Kelley was a speaker at the organization's annual fundraiser last fall.

Kelley loves the gorge and the urban river, but he also likes the stretch from Winona, Minn., to Prairie du Chien, Wis., where he used to spend time exploring on his houseboat.

"I was never much of a fisherman. I just enjoyed cruising." he said. "I would keep going until it got dark and just anchor."

"It's one river. It belongs to everybody."

Photos courtesy of Tom Kelley.

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Prairie du Chien from Pikes Peak photo by Eric Frydenlund

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Marquette & McGregor, Iowa

(Riverbank continued from page 3)

New Orleans for an easier route. Actually it probably would already have done that if not for the industrious resistance of the Army Corps of Engineers, which has built huge structures to prevent that from happening. I can't say I understand all the reasons for doing this, but one of them is to keep the port at New Orleans open.

All of these circumstances are connected by the Mississippi River, but they are not connected in our minds. Farmers do not grow corn in Illinois to kill shrimp in Louisiana. The Corps did not build the locks and dams to fill in the backwaters or destroy the Louisiana coast.

Meanwhile, the city of New Orleans is below sea level and even more below the river level and steadily sinking. So, just as it takes more effort every year to keep the Mississippi from bypassing New Orleans, it also takes more effort every year to keep the streets of New Orleans dry. Meanwhile, the land between the city and the gulf is disappearing. City residents have been lobbying the Corps for years to improve the dike system protecting the town, but the Corps has been more enthusiastic about justifying expansion of the lock-and-dam system up north so that midwestern grain can be shipped to New Orleans a little more cheaply.

Off the coast of Louisiana, where the waters of the Mississippi mingle with the gulf, lies the "Dead Zone," an area of water without enough oxygen to sustain life. The Dead Zone is created when nitrogen and phosphorous in fertilizers applied to farmland in the Upper Midwest washes into streams and rivers and eventually into the Mississippi, all to support an effort to grow grain and export it through New Orleans.

All of these circumstances are connected by the Mississippi River, but they are not connected in our minds. Farmers do not grow corn in Illinois to kill shrimp in Louisiana. The Corps did not build the locks and dams to fill in the backwaters or destroy the Louisiana coast. New Orleans grew up on the banks of a river much different than the one we know today.

I'm nowhere near smart enough to attach a moral to the story or offer a solution. I'd just like to share my fascination with the way we humans have remodelled this river, from top to bottom, some of it deliberately, but most of it as a result of doing something else.

One question, "Where is this headed? What will this picture look like in 50 years?"

River People

We have launched a new series on the last page of the magazine. "River People" will celebrate people who have made their mark on the river and who have also had their lives changed by the river. Tom Kelley is a great example to begin this series with.

We have run many stories about the riverfront in the Twin Cities without tracing events back to Tom, but that is where much of the credit belongs. In fact, I owe credit to Tom and his partner Kathy Stack for educating me about the urban river and some of the history and politics that have brought it to its present state.

We have been fortunate to know Tom and Kathy for a few years, but we're going to need your help discovering more river people for this new column. Please send us a note about any river people who you think we should include. Briefly tell us their stories, especially how they have affected the river and been affected by the river.

The Virginia Ingram *pushes the Habitat for Humanity barge past Winona in November. (Pamela Eyden)*

(River News continued from page 10)

The first houses in the "Rollin' on the River" project were loaded onto barges in the Twin Cities on October 23, under the watchful eye of NBC's "Today Show," and they began their voyage downriver, pushed by the towboat *Virginia Ingram*, courtesy of Ingram Barge Company.

The tow reached St. Louis on November 2, where volunteers got together under the Gateway Arch to build 10 more houseframes in a 40-hour blitz and load them onto the barges.

Habitat for Humanity plans to ship a total of 250 to 300 house frames in containers to the Gulf, as part of its Operation Home Delivery.

The tow made its last pickup in Memphis on November 19 and arrived in Baton Rouge on November 21, where the house frames were bolted onto waiting foundations.

Habitat plans to ship a total of 250 to 300 house frames in containers to the Gulf, as part of its Operation Home Delivery.

Living Lands and Waters, the East Moline, Ill.-based river-cleanup organization, also brought a crew down to New Orleans to assist in the cleanup.

Ancient Integration

Hanover, Ill. — A unique Native American settlement unearthed on the Apple River south of Hanover may become an archeological park, a prairie restoration site, a wildlife park, or all three. At any rate, it will no longer be plowed or farmed; it will be preserved.

The Archaeological Conservancy recently purchased the 78 acres of farmland and will turn it over to local control by the Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation.

Galena native Phil Millhouse, an archaeologist pursuing his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois, organized an archaeological dig on the site in 2003. U.I. students conducted the excavation. The site is unique, Millhouse said, because it illustrates a 10- to 15-year period in which two very different Native American societies converged, intermarried and assimilated.

"We caught this moment when there's this transformation. You never see that in archaeology. People change their materials so quickly you can't catch it," Millhouse said.

The site, dated circa 1050 A.D., revealed three distinct styles of pottery shards. One, made by the late Woodland people who were already settled in this area, has a corded design and a lip, or collar, and was tempered with grit. Another style was created by people of the Mississippian Culture, who were possibly political refugees from Cahokia, shell-tempered their pottery, varnished and polished it. The third type of shards are a blending of the other two styles.

"Basically," Millhouse said, "they were becoming a new culture." Up to 300 people may have lived together at the site.

After the dig, when the landowners wanted to sell their property, the Archaeological Conservancy, a national organization, arranged to purchase it. The sale was finalized even as the Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation applied for a $200,000 grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, to reimburse the Conservancy.

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The grant requires the land be both accessible to the public and a wildlife habitat.

Chris Kirkpatrick, a restoration ecologist with the Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation in Elizabeth, expected his agency to take possession of the property by the end of 2005.

Sixty acres of the farmland had been planted in soybeans, which Kirkpatrick said is great preparation for a prairie restoration. Called the John Chapman site, it is less than three miles from the Mississippi River.

Seeping Pesticides

Hastings, Minn. — Is Hastings a canary? All of this river town's municipal wells have elevated nitrate levels and farm chemicals, though at levels considered too low to be a health threat.

One well, however, has chemicals from the pesticide Cyanazine, no longer made or used in the United States. Cyanazine causes cancer and other ailments in lab rats.

Hastings, population 20,000, sits on sandy soil that allows faster seepage of agricultural chemicals and other pollutants. Isotope testing shows that pollutants took 50 years to reach Hastings' aquifer. Cities on harder

Isotope testing shows that pollutants took 50 years to reach Hastings' aquifer.

soils may also find increasing quantities of farm chemicals in their well water in the future.

To minimize seepage of pollutants into groundwater, Dakota County — which includes Hastings — will begin comprehensive septic-tank inspections in 2006. Friends of the Mississippi River, a St. Paul-based river-advocacy group, has also called for treatment of storm water runoff from parking lots, roads and rooftops; a minimum 100-foot buffer between stream banks and lawns or fields to filter nitrates and pesticides; and agricultural practices that prevent pesticide and nitrate runoff.

Ironically, Hastings will pay about $3 million to treat its contaminated wells — although the pollution comes from farms outside the city and even outside Dakota County.

The Twin Cities can expect more of the same. "The bigger issue is that this type of contamination is popping up all over the metro area and will continue until we find a way to manage our land use in a way that protects water quality," said Dan Huff, watershed program director for Friends of the Mississippi River. "Even less sensitive aquifers will one day be affected. It is only a matter of time."

River News by Pamela Eyden, Marc Hequet and Abbie Reese

Visit the Big River Home page (www.big-river.com) for links to information about stories marked with the mouse.

Upper Mississippi River Products and Services

BIG RIVER CALENDAR

Eagle Watches

Ongoing Through March

Eaglewatch, National Eagle Center, Wabasha, Minn., (651) 565-4989.

January

7 Lock & Dam 13, Clinton, Iowa, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Programs at Clinton Community College, 10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m., exhibits from 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Free bus service from the college to the outdoor viewing area, (815) 259-3628.

7-8 Bald Eagle Days, special attractions, QCCA Expo Center, Rock Island, Ill., (309) 794-5338.

14 Lock & Dam 11, Dubuque, Iowa, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Live eagle programs at Grand River Center, 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m., exhibits from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., (563) 556-4372.

14 Lock and Dam 16, Muscatine, Iowa, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Live raptor programs at Riverview Center, 9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m, (563) 263-7913.

14, 21 & 28 Bald eagle bus tours, Galena, Ill., 8 a. m. - noon, depart from Stoney Creek Inn, reservation, (815) 594-2306.

14-15 Bald Eagle Watching Days, Prairie du Sac and Sauk City, Wis., (800) 683-2453.

14-Feb. 19 weekends: Eagle watches and clock tower tours, Mississippi River Visitor Center, Rock Island, Ill., 9:30 a.m., 1 p.m., 3 p.m., reservations, (309) 794-5338.

28-29 Lock and Dam 14, LeClaire, Iowa, Sat. 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.; Sun. 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. Programs at Mississippi Valley Welcome Center, Sat. 10 and 11 a.m., noon; Sun. 1, 2 and 3 p.m., (563) 322-3911, ext.120.

28-29 Bald Eagle Days, Cassville, Wis., Riverside Park and Nelson Dewey State Park, (608) 725-5855.

February

4 Bald eagle appreciation day, Wisconsin Welcome Center, Prairie du Chien, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., live bald eagle program at 1 p.m. Exhibits, programs, outdoor viewing and field trips, (800) 732-1673.

Special Events

January

1 Whitewater River Valley Christmas bird count, morning & afternoon, Elba, Minn., (507) 932-3007.

7 Trout fishing, Whitewater State Park, Elba, Minn., reservations, (507) 932-3007.

7-March 27 Film festival, Effigy Mounds National Monument, Harpers Ferry, Iowa, (563) 873-3491.

19-21 Frozen River Film Festival, Winona State University, Winona, Minn., (507) 459-8090.

21 Ice fishing extravaganza, noon - 3 p.m., Gull Lake, Brainerd, Minn.

21 Golden Eagle count, blufflands and valleys near Winona, MInn., (608) 248-2698.

22-29 Winter Rec-Fest, La Crosse, Wis., (608) 789-7533.

27-Feb.5 Winter Carnival, St. Paul.

28 Candlelight hike, Nelson Dewey State Park, Cassville, Wis.

February

4 Winterfest, 10 a.m. - 3 p. m., Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, Zimmerman, Minn., (763) 389-3323 or (877) 721-4295.

4 B-rrry Scurry race, Clinton, Iowa, (563) 244-7050.

4 Brice Prairie Conservation Association fishing derby, Lake Onalaska, Onalaska, Wis., (608) 781-9570.

10-12 International Eelpout Festival, Walker, Minn.

11 Moonlight snowshoeing, Whitewater State Park, Elba, Minn., reservations, (507) 932-3007.

13 Snowshoeing and owl watching, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m., Carpenter Nature Center, Hastings,Minn., pre-register, (651) 437-4359.

18 Lions Club ice fishing derby, Lake Onalaska, Onalaska, Wis., (608) 781-9570 or (800) 873-1901.

25 Grumpy Old Men, Wabasha, Minn.

Open Houses

Comment on Alternative E for the Upper Miss Refuge plan.

(507) 452-4232

January

3 Stoddard American Legion Post 315, 414 Broadway St., Stoddard, Wis., 6 to 8 p.m.

5 La Crescent-Hokah Public Schools, 1301 Lancer Blvd., La Crescent, Minn., 6 to 8 p.m.

7 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Resource Center, 555 Lester Ave., Onalaska, Wis., 1 to 4 p.m.

9 Lansing, Iowa, 6 to 8 p.m.

10 Prairie du Chien, Wis., 6 to 8 p.m.

17 Savanna, Ill., 6 to 8 p.m.

18 Dubuque, Iowa, 6 to 8 p.m.

23 Winona, Minn., 6 to 8 p.m.

24 Wabasha, Minn., 6 to 8 p.m.

Boat Shows

January

6-8 Iowa Boat and Vacation Show, UNI-Dome - Cedar Falls, Iowa.

11-15 Minnesota Sportsmen's Boat, Camping & Vacation Show, RiverCentre, St. Paul, Minnesota.

11-15 Chicago Boat, RV & Outdoors Show, McCormick Place, (312) 946-6200.

13-15 Quad City Boat, RV & Vacation Show, River Center, Davenport, Iowa.

18-22 Minneapolis Boat Show, Convention Center, (312) 946-6291.

27-29 Madison Boat Show, Madison, Wis.

February

9-12 Minnesota Boat & Marine Products Show, Riverscentre, St. Paul, (763) 755-8111.

9–12 La Crosse (Wis.) Boat, Sports and Travel Show.

17-19 St. Cloud (Minn.) Sportsmen's Show, Civic Center, (763) 755-8111.

24-26 Madison (Wis.) Fishing Expo, Alliant Center, (608) 245-1040.

The Book and the River

Celebration of the Book 2006, Winona (Minn.) State University, (507) 457-5418

February

8 Writing *Immortal River,* author Cal Fremling, 7 p.m., Science Lab Bldg. Auditorium.

22 The Book and the River in the 20th Century, Patrick Coleman, Minn. Historical Society Press, 7 p.m., Science Lab Bldg. Auditorium.

March

1 The River We Have Written, John Anfinson, National Park Service, 7 p.m., Science Lab Bldg. Auditorium.

2 Writing the River, panel includes, John Anfinson, Cal Fremling, Reggie McLeod & Richie Swanson, 7 p.m. Winona County Historical Society.

8 Reading the River: How Science Gauges the Mississippi, panel of scientists from USGS, NOAA, Army Corps & WSU, 7 p.m., Science Lab Bldg. Auditorium.

www.big-river.com

Check the **Big River calendar** on our website for additional contact information and updated events throughout the month.

Tom Kelley:

The River Belongs to Everybody

By Reggie McLeod

Tom Kelley, 79, can look out the window of his apartment and watch eagles soaring over the Mississippi River gorge near the Ford Bridge in St. Paul. Actually, he's been keeping an eye on the river for several decades from many perspectives. His concern and work have helped bring the eagles and the people back to the river in the Twin Cities.

After college the St. Paul native worked as a reporter in Chicago and Washington, D.C., before returning to Minnesota and then to a post at WCCO television in the Twin Cities. Then a turn on Hubert Humphrey's senate campaign led him to shift his career to government, where he worked for the state, Ramsey County and St. Paul, where he served under Mayor George Latimer as the city's first city administrator.

After winning election to the Ramsey County Auditor post in 1966 he saw an opportunity.

"It's the smallest county in the state and was pretty fully developed," Kelly recalled. "I saw the river as a great recreational resource running right through the middle of town and not getting the proper attention."

He helped convince the state legislature to allow the county to raise $16 million to buy and make improvements on land for recreation, much of it along the river. Purchases included former industrial land and flood prone land without much commercial value, but with potential value for wildlife and recreation.

The county bought land and swapped land to piece together contiguous strips of riverfront. Purchases included land in Lilydale and what is now the Bruce Vento Sanctuary. Now parks and recreational trails line much of St. Paul's riverfront.

Kelley also served on various committees and commissions, where he got to know David Durenberger before he was elected to the U.S. Senate.

Since 1984 he has lived within sight of the river, with the exception of three years when he lived on a sailboat, mostly around the Bahamas and Florida. He's lived on Dayton's Bluff, downtown St. Paul and on the gorge. For five or six years he spent the warm months in his houseboat, the *Archie L.*, on Harriet Island.

Above: Tom Kelley's houseboat, the Turtle, *had wheels in the pontoons and a yoke on the bow, so that it could be towed without a trailer.*

Below: Kelley strolls Harriet Island.

"It was great to get up in the morning and walk across the bridge and be at work."

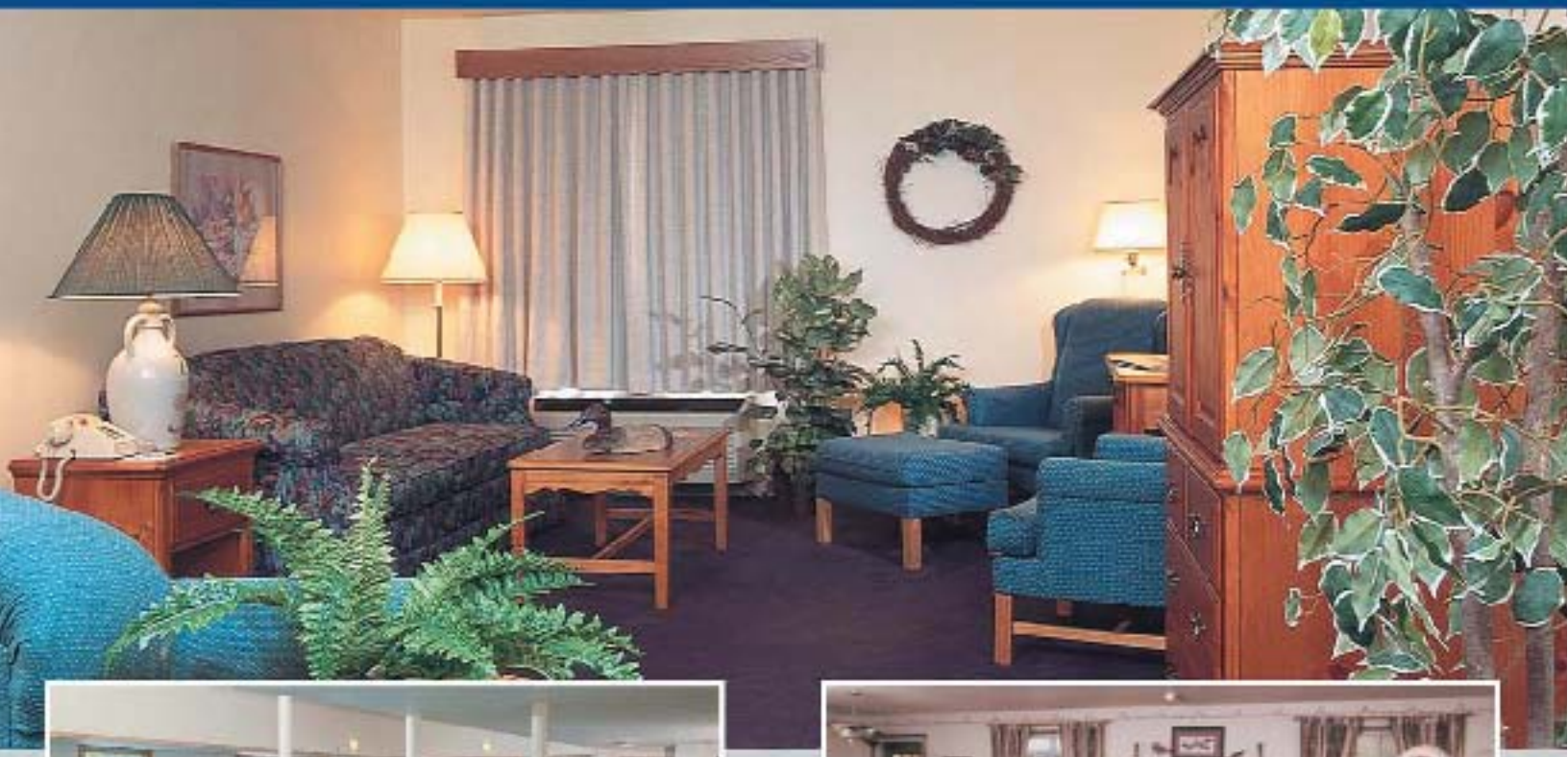
When he retired in 1984, the city named Kelley's Landing in his honor.

"Naming a place after someone is a big deal in St. Paul," explained George Latimer, who served as mayor of St. Paul from 1976 to 1990.

Latimer first got involved in politics working on Kelley's campaign for county auditor in the 1960s. He remembers Kelley's interest in providing a corridor of public land

(Tom Kelley continued on page 23)

BIG RIVER ❖ BIG SUITES



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