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RUSSELL ISLAND NEWSLETTER

VOLUME I

EDITOR, DON POLLARD

No. 7

Al Truax has a splendid idea and is arranging a mid-winter get-together for islanders and their friends. His announcement follows:

HOW ABOUT COMING TO THE FIRST ANNUAL

RUSSELL ISLAND FLING

DAY: SATURDAY DATE: JANUARY 22, 1966 PLACE: CARMEN TOWERS TIME: 7:00 P.M.
Excellent smorgasbord dinner. (Dessert included) Plus dancing afterwards.

1 or 2 bartenders as needed

PRICE: \$5.00 per person for dinner

\$1.00 per person for bartender (s) and tips

IF YOU PREFER BEER: Add \$1.50 per person, otherwise bring the bottle of your choice.
Set-ups are free.

NON ISLAND FRIENDS ARE WELCOME

The maximum capacity is 160 persons so please send your check immediately to:

A. J. Truax, 38530 Orangelawn, Livonia, Michigan 48150

January 3, 1966 is the deadline

DIRECTIONS

East siders - take westbound Edsel Ford to Michigan Avenue. Follow Michigan to Schaefer - turn right or North on Schaefer, past Ford Road to the Carmen Theatre - turn right on Alber Street and park because you're there.

For any additional information, please call Phyllis Scott at 372-2731 or Joyce Truax at 464-1719.

ISLAND ITEMS

Some of us pay an occasional mid-winter visit to the Island on a Sunday afternoon when the weather is not too severe.

A few do better than that. For years the Hobey Loomis family, even when the two boys were very small, have spent holidays and long weekends at their cottage during the coldest months.

There have been caretakers and patrollers who have been on the island most of each winter, but no one, since the days of George Brown, had attempted to make his cottage a year-round habitation until the Gordon Laramies came along.

The Laramies keep their electric heat on and their water connected through the winter. Into the late fall they commute from the mainland in their outboard boat (Gordon says if you leave the motor in the water it won't freeze under normal conditions).

Later in the season they take the Champion ferry to Harsen's Island, drive to Grande Pointe Canal and walk across Sand Island. If the two canals that have been traversed en route are not frozen they cross by boat or, recently, by temporary floating bridges. For hauling their gear they use, rather than the traditional red wagon, a deer sled.

When the ice is thick enough the Laramies drive from Grande Pointe Canal on the South Channel ice, staying near shore, right up to their cottage. Sometimes they have had at the same time, a car parked on the canal by their boathouse and a pick-up truck on the river by their dock.

"There's no other place within a thousand miles where you can get away from things so completely", Ruth Laramie said, "especially after the holidays when you've been busy and keyed up, it's wonderful to go up for a few days." The snow is so white and clean and usually it's possible to drive the golf cart all around the island.

Before the holidays some of the freighters begin to break out very elaborate Christmas decorations, trees and Santas, and reindeers set along their loading booms and either floodlighted or illuminated colored lights. A decorated boat going by in a heavy snow is one of the most beautiful sights you can imagine.

Usually the only people we ever see in mid-winter are Joe Kirby, the McGregor caretaker, or the Loomis family or Herman Hamel. But we know that in an emergency we could always phone for help.

Gordon recalls a night they put up a Walpole Island Indian who had lost his way during a heavy blizzard.

"His face was badly cut up from falling on the ice and he hadn't been able to tell where he was going or where headed," Gordon said. "He was very grateful and I think myself our being there may have saved his life."

"Watching the Indians crossing the ice between Walpole and Algonac is always an amazing show. They pick their way across when you wouldn't think a goat could make it."

"One time we saw an Indian woman starting home with a big load of groceries. At the same time we saw the ice breaker Mackinac coming down. We realized the ship was going to break the ice before the Indian woman could cross ahead of it and we were wondering what we could do when -- darned if the ship didn't come to a dead stop just off the Kroll dock. The skipper waited until the woman was well across and then proceeded to break up the ice behind her."

Last January 8, the Laramies entertained dinner guests at the cottage. "We suddenly decided it would be nice to have someone in," Ruth said. "We called the Hertz's and

about noon and left about four it wasn't too different from any dinner at home."

The Laramies think the Loomis' are doing a fine thing in teaching their young sons something about outdoor winter living. The Loomis' do not attempt to keep their cottage open all the time but two oil heaters warm the place fairly quick.

For crossing the canals Hobey has a boat equipped with runners that can be pulled across ice or through water, or both, depending on conditions. Herman Kamel, Sr., is the only Islander who has fallen into the ice water lately and it didn't phase him a bit.

Gordon looks forward to a future when the Island will be accessible year round.

"The wastes from the industries around Sarnia and Marysville have made the river much more open than it used to be," he said. "Except for early in the winter and during the spring ice breakup, there are comparatively few days when a ferry couldn't run from Algonac."

"I think some day the Island will be a year round resort and winter won't be the least pleasant season, by any means."

One of the more praiseworthy Island activities of recent years has received perhaps less recognition than it deserves.

Meaning the swimming and life saving tests which Mrs. Helen Bryant, daughter of the Pete Valassis', has been offering each summer at the Big Dock to junior swimmers.

Helen's unselfish donation of her time has restored peace of mind to numerous Island mothers and quite possibly saved a young life or two.

The mothers say that after their children have passed the tough Bryant test they stop worrying no matter how many times the young ones get pushed off the end of the dock during the summer afternoons. The children themselves have been given a chance to show that they can be serious enough when they have a goal that captures their interest.

During the past four years about thirty children, including some very small ones, have passed the strenuous test. The children start by treading water for fifteen minutes and then, without resting, swim against the current three fourths of the way to the LaJolie-Schroeder dock.

The tireless kids then must demonstrate proficiency in three swimming strokes, diving and surface diving, the life saving jump and life saving carries. They finish by swimming a prescribed distance using arms only and then using legs only.

Helen, who works in the accounting division of Shelby Lithographing Company, Inc., designed the test after her own son and three daughters began pestering her for permission to swim off the end of the Big Dock. The children are Ginger, 13; Billie, 12; Wayne, 11 and Marie, 9.

"I told them they would have to pass a test first," Helen said. "I wanted a test that would stress endurance and I made it so hard I didn't think they could pass it. But they did. And just about all the other children who have become interested and asked to take it have passed too."

"If they don't make it the first time they keep working and try again."

Helen earned her own life saving certificate while a student at Mackenzie High School.

A tip to Islanders for next October's Halloween Party:

Aubie and Jane Glancy, chairmen of this years event, point out that while only six persons took the trouble to appear in costume for the judging, each one of the six won a prize.

Your officers wish to each and every member a very Happy Holiday Season.

Don't forget to make your reservations NOW for the FLING. See you all at the Carmen Towers.