Haze Haven Resort–A Fisherman's Dream
by Dr. James D. Henderson

The story of Haze Haven Resort begins in the late 1890s when Solomon "Sol" Marquis, Jr. was granted a homestead on 24 February 1898 for 156 acres of land on section 28 in Pelican Township. His homestead extended from the west shore of Pelican Lake across what is now County Highway 4 to the northeastern shore of a large bay. Around 1910 he established the first resort on Pelican Lake that later was known as Little Pelican Lake after the entrance to the bay silted in and boaters could no longer travel out to the larger part of the lake. He called it Wassena Lodge from the Ojibwe word for "light".

Over the years, Wassena gained prominence as a lodging place for guests visiting the lakes area, and a great place to dine with lots of dancing and entertainment. In 1926 Marquis sold the lodge to John & Myrtle Stone and built a new home on the western shore of Big Pelican Lake. He operated a resort at his home called Marquis Place until his death in 1935.

After "Captain Billy" Fawcett built Breezy Point Lodge in 1921 several resorts sprang up around the shores of Pelican Lake. By the early 1950s family-operated housekeeping resorts on Big Pelican Lake included Barlow's Resort, Crow Wing Camp, 5 Aces, Golden Pine Resort, It's It Resort, Johnnies Resort, Jones Resort, Pelican Port, Trail's End Resort, and Velvet Beach. Little Pelican Lake had Pine Rocks Camp, Shady Lane and Wassena Lodge. During the next two decades resort ownership often changed hands faster than a bucket in a fire brigade.

After Sol's death his wife Caroline sold parts of lots 2 and 5 in Section 28 to Eda Barlow and her husband William in 1939. Bill and Eda came from St. Paul where he previously worked as a photo engraver. The couple established Wm. Barlow's Resort on the site. This portion of the Marquis property with 800 feet of shoreline was at the south end of Edgewater Beach where Marquis had his home.
The lodge at Wm. Barlow’s Resort c. 1950 was the future home of Haze Haven. In the late 1920s the lodge also served as the home and resort operated by Sol Marquis. According to Karlo Goerges, son of Joe Goerges, the last proprietor of Haze Haven, “the screen door was the front entrance to the office...that door saw a lot of traffic as that was where the candy store was, office and freezer for the fish that were caught. On the left side was the kitchen where the awning is and the front that protrudes out was the linen and supply area for items needed in the cabins.”

Photo courtesy of Ren Holland, *Early Resorts of Minnesota*.

These rocks may have been used as a base to support a metal drum kiln to burn wood to produce charcoal and wood gas. Marquis piped the gas to his lodge and cabins for illumination and cooking.

The two stone planters and sidewalk were built by Sol Marquis as an entrance to his lodge and can be also be seen in the top photo next to the tree in front of the screen door. The building in the background is the playhouse where laundry was done and kids played games.
Wm. Barlow's Resort in 1949 was described as having six clean comfortable housekeeping cabins, spaced well apart, plenty of room to roam with innerspring mattresses, running water, electric refrigeration, gas, fuel, linens, an excellent swimming beach, playgrounds, motors, and new boats. It closed for the season on November 15.

In 1951 Ralph W. "Pat" Hays and his wife Josephine purchased a parcel of land further south on the west shore of Pelican Lake. It was located on Section 4 in Lake Edward Township (135), from Helen Kuschke, a widow living on Lake Edward. The Hays' opened It's It Resort in 1951 with new modern housekeeping cottages and new fishing boats. In April 1959 they sold the resort to James & Alice Whitlock who renamed it Pelican Beach Resort, which is still in operation today. A month later the Hays' purchased Barlow's Resort from Bill and Eda Barlow. They renamed the resort Haze Haven.

Pat Hays had been a woodworker at Mersman Table factory in Celina, Ohio in 1940. His wife Jo also worked in the same factory as a seamstress. His carpenter skills were very useful when the couple moved to Pelican Lake and began their resort business.

Above - Haze Haven Resort cottages on Big Pelican Lake, Summer 1971. The white building on the beach is the beach locker where guests could store their boat motors, fishing gear and other beach items. Each cabin had a separate locker in the building. Left - The locker still remains on the shore at the old Haze Haven Resort site.
An early brochure touted the resort's features. 'All nine cottages are completely equipped for housekeeping except for bath towels. Furnishings include all bed linens and blankets, electric refrigerators, gas for heat and cooking, oven stoves, dishes and cooking utensils.' All the cottages had private showers with hot water. The brochure also explained that the playhouse was for all ages. Badminton, horseshoes, swings and slides for tots, arrow target, outdoor fireplaces, picnic tables, basketball, croquet, and other activities were situated throughout the large grounds.

Pelican Lake's great fishing drew loads of vacationers to the mom & pop resorts on the lake and Haze Haven was no exception. The Brainerd paper often featured articles and photos of big fish caught by resort guests.

Besides running the resort, Pat and Jo were active in the Pelican Lake Conservation Club. Jo served as the Club secretary and was a long-time treasurer of Pelican Township.

In 1969 the Hays' sold Haze Haven on a contract for deed to Doris and Reino "Ray" Martin and Josef and Agnes Goerges. Doris and Agnes were sisters. The Goerges family often spent their summer vacations at Haze Haven in the 1960s, so they were quite familiar with its operation. The Martin's ran the resort for two years and then sold their interest to the Goerges's. The resort opened the 1972 season with the Goerges family operating it. In 1974 Doris and Ray Martin then purchased Wassena Lodge and operated it for 12 years.

Sol Marquis' fieldstone fireplace remains on the beach at the old resort site looking much as it was some 90 years ago.
Karlo Goerges, tells the story about how his parents and family came to America. “Joe was born in Yugoslavia, along with his mother, brother and sisters, and immigrated from Germany to the United States after World War II. They were refugees during the war, and had lost all their property, home and business in Yugoslavia, which became a communist country after World War II. Joe came to St. Paul, Minnesota in 1951, met Agnes in 1952 and were married in 1953. They had eight children.”

Joe and Agnes expanded the resort after they purchased it. Originally Sol Marquis had 3 cabins; the Barlow's added 3 cabins; the Hays's added 3 cabins, the playhouse, shuffleboard court and boat locker; and the Goerges's added 3 cabins for a total of twelve cabins in addition to the playground building and boathouse. The resort had its own laundry facility and outdoor clotheslines. Saturdays was changeover day and very busy with lots of help coming in to clean cabins and prepare bedding, cleaning boats, etc. for guest coming in by 4 p.m. Clearly running a resort was hard work and all the Goerges kids helped out.

The family continued running the resort through the 1981 season after which it closed. The family sold off three lots along the Pelican Lake shoreline. Bert Avenson purchased two of the cabins. At the time, Bert was owner of Pelican Beach resort on the southwest side of Pelican Lake, about 3 miles south of Haze Haven resort. Bert moved cabins #7 and #8 across the ice to Pelican Beach. This was done over 2 different winters. First cabin #7, and then cabin #8. Bert had to keep an ice road open all winter long, so the ice would get thick enough to carry the weight of the cabins and truck skidding it. The ice got to a thickness of about 5 feet from clearing the snow off the ice road most of the winter. The width of the road was about 60 to 70 feet for over 3 miles! The cabins were moved around the end of February each winter. Bert also did excavation work with his equipment, when not working at his resort.

All the remaining cottages were demolished in 1982 and 1983. The old concrete shuffleboard court, however, still remains near the shore without a crack in it. Silently waiting for the next game.

The booming era of northland resorts occurred in the 1950s and 60s. Today the small family resort business in Minnesota seems to be fading away. In the last three decades the state has lost nearly 50% of its family operated resorts. Changing expectations of guests and the declining value of the businesses relative to the value of the land they sit on have contributed to this decline. Haze Haven was one of these.

The author wishes to give a special thanks to Karlo Goerges who shared his knowledge about the history of Haze Haven Resort and the period when his parents, Joe & Agnes Goerges, owned and operated the resort. Dr. Henderson is collecting information and old photos of resorts, cabins and cottages around Pelican Lake for future articles in the PLA newsletter. If you have photos or information you’d like to share with our readers please email Jim Henderson at james7122@gmail.com.