



Breezy Pointer

1921-2021 CENTENNIAL EDITION

THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS

Editor's note:

2021 marks the 100th anniversary of Breezy Point Resort. It is also the 40th anniversary of the Resort's ownership by the Spizzo family.

In the Beginning

Pelican Township, MN, — It's the start of the "roaring twenties", flappers and prohibition. The "War to end all wars" is over. On February 13, 1921, a flamboyant millionaire publicist from the twin cities slapped \$500 on a table as the down payment for the purchase of a sight unseen, 80-acre parcel of land on the west shore of Pelican Lake.



Wilford H. "Captain Billy" Fawcett, founder of Fawcett Publications and Breezy Point Resort

The seller, Fred LaPage, had built a modest frame house and four cabins on the property. He had named the place "Breezy Point".

Anxious to see what he bought, he and LaPage set out from the Twin Cities the next morning, Valentine's Day. A howling blizzard pounded them, delaying their arrival until 3:00 the following morning.

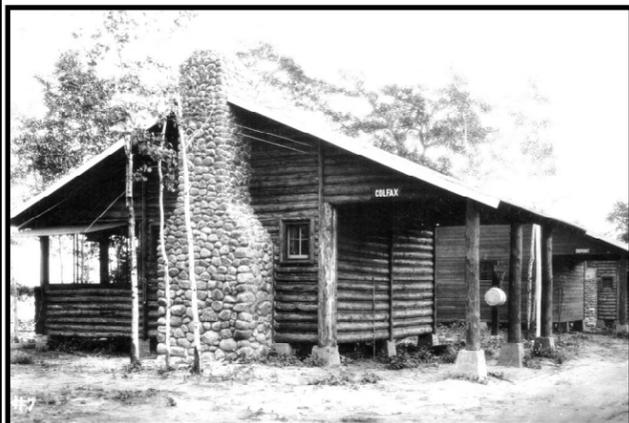
With the biting wind and snow swirling around him, Wilfred Hamilton Fawcett, aka "Captain Billy Fawcett", surveyed his purchase. This was no easy feat, as the deep snow blanketed everything, with 10-foot drifts in places.

"A new summer resort to be called Breezy Point Lodge has been established at the north end of Pelican Lake by W. F. Fawcett of Robbinsdale. It will have 18 summer cottages, large dance pavilion, grocery store, bath houses, etc. Fawcett has purchased a 110 volt, 3 KW lighting plant and a water heater from Electric Garage."
Brainerd Dispatch, April 1, 1921

Fawcett and LaPage used the house for their temporary stay and immediately started work on plans for a substantial building program on the neighboring bluff overlooking the lake.

Fawcett did nothing in moderation. His vision was to build a playground for his friends and family as well as a resort to entertain the public.

As soon as the frost left the ground, several crews of craftsmen started work on the first of what



Colfax Cabin

would become 48 guest cabins. Fawcett named each cottage alphabetically after streets in Minneapolis. Once the alphabetical names of Minneapolis streets were exhausted, 8 cottages were named after St. Paul streets and 4 named after Indian tribes.

Each of the initial cabins had one bedroom, a kitchen area and a sitting area with a fieldstone fireplace for heat. No insulation was provided since the Resort was only open in the summer months.

In the center of the circular drive was a common area that also contained a trading post. Their inventory included food staples, basic supplies and, of course, a few souvenirs. It became a gathering place for the guests.

More cabins were added in 1922 and 1923 to meet the increasing demand. The opening of the main lodge in 1924 and the adjoining hotel became the focal point of the Resort. Guests in the cabins now had the choice of preparing their own meals or dining at the lodge.

The cabins overlooking Breezy Bay were used for employee housing.

Tourist demand for these cottages was so great that by July of 1922, an additional thirteen cottages were built. Although built to retain a rustic feel, modern features such as generator-powered electric lights delighted the guests.

The public loved it. A hotel was added to ease the 1922 season but by the 1923 season, even it was overflowing.

As an added attraction, in 1923 Fawcett developed a 9-hole golf course. This course, The Traditional, is still a focal point of the Resort.

That winter, Fawcett began planning for the 1924 season. He commissioned the architectural firm of Magney & Tusler, the designers of the famed Foshay Tower in Minneapolis, to design an equally fantastic structure at Breezy Point. Of course, it would be a very different building, blending in with the northwoods property.

At the same time, a lumber company on the Canadian border, some 200 miles from Breezy Point, was running its last cut of Minnesota pine.



Laying of the logs for the Lodge, 1923

Fawcett combined the architectural creativity of Magney & Tusler with the lumber company's massive logs and produced the plans for what would become the renowned Breezy Point Lodge.

This was no small undertaking. The Lodge would be built with full-round Norway pine logs. When the logs arrived in March and April of 1924, some measured over 70 feet in length. They arrived by rail in Pequot Lakes on seventy-two flat cars and were then trucked to the construction site.

Building commenced on the Lodge, Fawcett's personal residence, and a machine repair shop. One hundred seven men worked on these immense buildings for over seven months.

The Lodge was an impressive sight. Built on a slope, its first floor was exposed only on the lakeside. Here were bowling alleys, a billiard parlor, and a beauty shop.

The main entrance, off the street, was on the sec-



"Captain Billy" and Mrs. Antoinette Fawcett in front of the Lodge with their 1925 Lincoln.

ond floor. Here was the lobby, a huge dance floor and a dining room larger than any that Minneapolis could claim. Measuring 60 by 120 feet and walled by gigantic varnished logs, it dwarfed the beholder. On each side were massive fireplaces, 12 feet wide and 44 feet high. The dining room could seat 700 guests and could accommodate as many as 1000. At the end of the room was a spacious stage for seating the dance band or handling stage productions. The kitchen was equipped with the finest facilities of the time.

The third floor contained guest and storage facilities. The girls' dormitory, employee cabins, laundry house, workshop and horse barn were built along the high bank west of the water tower. The farmhouse and two small rooms on the first floor of the Lodge accommodated the kitchen help. The chef and head baker had cabins by the bay.

During his "spare" time, Fawcett pursued his favorite hobby, becoming a world-renowned big game hunter. His mounted trophies adorned every wall throughout the Lodge.

Fawcett's personal residence was a two-story log mansion with a full basement, nine bedrooms and seven bathrooms in addition to the parlor, dining room, kitchen and an office. A spectacular spiral staircase connected the first and second floors. As frosting on the cake, it presented a panoramic view of Pelican Lake. Ten years later, Fawcett added two wings to the home.

(Built of native Norway pine logs, the Fawcett House today hosts family reunions and other groups. It contains many of the original furnishings, elk and deer trophies, and, some say, ghosts from years past.)

The lodge opened on June 10, 1925. Within weeks, it became known as the greatest display of pure extravaganza in the "Minnesota Northwest". The Lodge became "The Destination" for the rich and famous hosting celebrities such as Clark Gable, Carole Lombard, Tom Mix and Jack Dempsey.

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Living room in the Fawcett House

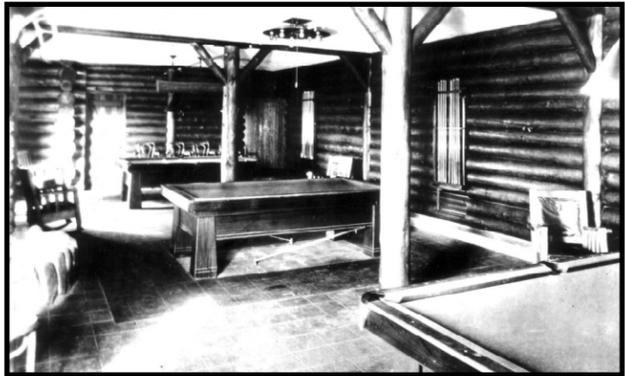
In addition to the dining room, the Lodge offered a barber shop, beauty shop, delicatessen, cigar stand, billiard hall, casino and bowling alley.

Although Fawcett was not a gambler, he had for his guests an elaborate casino. It had two roulette wheels, craps tables, poker tables and slot machines.

Prohibition was the law of the land until December of 1933. It did not however, prevent the Resort from serving alcohol to its guests. Some efforts by local law enforcement were taken to shut down illegal liquor operations but they were sporadic and ineffective at best. It is not clear where the Resort's alcohol was obtained but most likely made its way from Canada.



Lodge Dining Room



Billiard Room

The tourist crowds kept growing. Frenzied expansion could not keep up with the guest booking requests. Fawcett solved the problem with the building of the three-story Edgewater Annex. The first and second floors had 63 guest rooms. The third floor held a conference hall seating 700 guests.



Fawcett with Betty Grable and Jackie Coogan

As a playground for his rich and famous friends, he meticulously planned a luxurious resort for relaxation in the woods that would include facilities for every guest, no matter what their interests may be.

The menu of activities was astounding. His plans materialized in short order and included a stable with saddle horses, trapshooting range, tennis



Delicatessen in the Lodge.

courts, fishing boats and guides, airplane excursions, bowling, billiards, a zoo with native animals, a water wheel and water slide on the beach, liquor, gambling and, of course, golf.

Fawcett's early success with *Captain Billy's Whiz Bang* was the foundation for his publishing empire, Fawcett Publications. He recognized that the risqué writings in his *Whiz Bang* magazine limited his readership to young men. He expanded into the motion picture world, publishing magazines such as *Screen Secrets*, *Screen Book*, *Hollywood*, *True Confessions* and *Screen Play* that featured movie stars and other luminaries.

Thus he became a member of Hollywood's inner circle and often hosted the stars at the Lodge. Rubbing elbows with the stars gave Fawcett the stories he needed although some of the sensational "scoops" were fabrications of the stars' publicists.

"Talkies" were replacing the silent movies and the fame of movie stars who could actually be heard was the talk of the day.



Stylish swimmers of the 1930s

The movie industry itself was a closely-knit group but Fawcett catered to the stars to get the inside stories for his new magazines. He frequently hosted these celebrities at the Resort. His reputation and contacts enabled him to attract to the Lodge personalities from the sporting and literary circles as well.

Expense was no object when Fawcett entertained his celebrity guests. They would arrive in Pequot Lakes in a private railway car. The road between Pequot Lakes and the Resort was poor at best so Fawcett paid to have it paved.

While at the Resort, the guests had a huge menu of activities from which to choose. They could just relax or take part in boating, fishing, golf, tennis, airplane rides, horseback riding, billiards, trapshooting, bowling, visiting Fawcett's zoo and throwing horseshoes and, of course, gambling and liquor.

In the evenings they would join Fawcett for elegant dinners in his private dining room in the Lodge. Each dinner plate used for these soirées reportedly cost \$75.

The evenings also offered live entertainment by the resident Resort band. The spring of 1922 saw

work start on the front nine of what is today's Traditional Golf Course. The land was rugged and clearing the intense brush and jack pines consumed the better part of the summer. After this initial clearing was completed the fairways and greens were sculpted, much of it with shovels and rakes, and the steel piping for irrigation was installed. Next came countless truckloads of black dirt and hand seeding. With continual attention, the course was ready for play in early 1923.



Lodge house orchestra, "A sterling troupe of mirthful troubadours."



Early Chippewa golf course fairway

The course was named Chippewa and became a Midwest favorite. In 1924 Fawcett, a master at promotion, hosted the 10,000 Lakes Tournament, an annual event that would continue until 1965.

During the first 10 years of the tournament Les Bolstad won 3 times and Harry Legg won twice. For the next few years, Bolstad was one of the top Minnesota golfers. He then chose to devote his golf skills to teaching and coaching the Minnesota Gophers from 1947 to 1976.

The Brainerd Dispatch on June 29, 1929, reported, "Harry Legg, Minneapolis, will again defend his title in the 10,000 Lakes Golf Tournament at Breezy Point Lodge. Legg, winner of the past two years, is a former Western Amateur champ, six-time Trans-Mississippi champ, plus various other wins." Legg was unable to make it 3 in a row and lost to Roscoe Fawcett, Captain Billy's brother.

As the golf activity at the Lodge grew, so did the demand for caddies. Fawcett had a preference for hiring local boys as caddies, some of whom were as young as 10 years old. This was a tiresome job for these youngsters. There were no carts so the clubs were carried on their backs. One former caddie remarked that the golf club bags were made heavier when the golfers further loaded them with their bottles of liquor.

The tournaments were not just reserved for men. The women's tournaments also held the public's attention. During the first 10 years of the tournament, Mrs. Ralph Little of the Minneapolis Golf Club, won 5 times.

Patty Berg, who would go on to national golfing fame, won 3 back-to-back tournaments in 1933 to 1935. Her first win was at the age of 15. Amazingly, she had taken up golf only 2 years earlier.

It was these contacts that, in July of 1925, brought Walter Hagen to the Lodge for an exhibition

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game. Hagen had won the US Open in 1914 and 1919, the British Open in 1922 and 1924 and the PGA Championships in 1921 and 1924. He went on to win a total of 5 PGA Championships, 4 British Opens and captained the U.S. in the first 6 Ryder Cups.



Walter Hagen's exhibition match, 1926

Fawcett, never one to shy away from publicity, added some intrigue to Hagen's appearance.

A news article in August of 1929 reported the growing tourist industry in the Brainerd area. It claimed that Brainerd was the headquarters for 150,000 tourists who visited the area in 1928 and that in the area there were 800 sleeping and house-keeping cottages capable of accommodating over 10,000 people. It was estimated that tourists spent \$275,000 in the area.

On October 24, 1929, "Black Thursday", the stock market crashed, dragging the country into the Great Depression.

Fawcett, always the optimist, had thus far been successful in luring the top golfers in the nation to his course but also realized that in order to better compete with the courses in the Twin Cities he had to create a back nine.

Plans for the back nine were drawn and a public announcement of the expansion was made in the August 26, 1930, issue of the *Brainerd Dispatch*. "The Breezy Point Lodge golf course is to be enlarged from a 9-hole to an 18-hole course, with work starting in September. It is expected to be ready for play next July 4th. Capt. Fawcett had purchased additional acres of land for just this purpose."

Quietly, the expansion plans were put on hold.

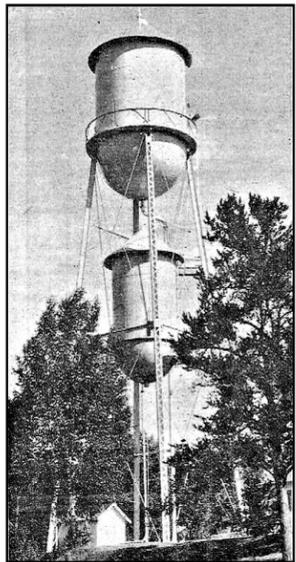
Fawcett's rapid expansion of the Resort taxed the system of water wells to its breaking point. In 1930, Fawcett set about to modernize the system. He contracted with a Twin Cities firm to design and build a centralized water system that would serve the fresh water needs of the Resort and eliminate the existing network of wells and pumps.

Locals who visited the site daily to view the progress were unsure what to make of the structure. In addition to the familiar tank on top, a second, smaller tank was taking shape beneath it.

The upper tank had a capacity of 50,000 gallons. Its water was drawn from Pelican Lake and was used for irrigation and fire control. The lower tank, with a capacity of 20,000 gallons, was fed by a well and supplied the Resort's drinking and washing water. The lower tank was removed in the mid-60s.

While in Los Angeles on February 7, 1940, Fawcett suffered a heart attack and, just short of his 55th birthday, passed away.

After his death, his sons took over Breezy Point Lodge, operating it through the 1941 season. The Lodge closed from 1942



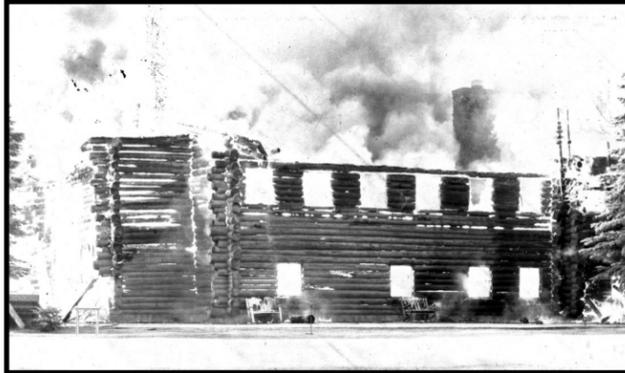
Original water tower

through 1945. Gas rationing during World War II had killed the tourist business.

Theron "Tiny" Holmes, who held the Coca-Cola franchise in Brainerd, MN, purchased Breezy Point Lodge in 1946.

Holmes operated the resort for two years and, in 1947, sold it to Jack Salinger and his silent partner, Brownie Cote.

Disaster struck Breezy Point Lodge on June 20, 1959. At 5:30 that morning, the fire alarms in the area sounded. The Lodge was ablaze. When the fire was discovered, it had already consumed the telephone system. An employee had to drive a mile to call for help.



Lodge fire

The logs burned fiercely, defying all efforts to bring the fire under control. By the time firemen from several communities arrived, the heat was so intense they were unable to get near enough to fight it. Instead, they concentrated on watering down the nearby cottages by pumping water from the lake.

The loss of the focal point of Breezy Point Lodge signaled a turning point in the resort's fortunes. A succession of owners attempted to breathe new life into the resort, passing it from one to another like a "hot potato".

Profitable operations of the resort continued to elude a succession of owners. Years later, Captain Billy's son, Roscoe Fawcett, recounted that the resort never turned a profit during his father's ownership. With only a 3-month window of opportunity, early June to the week after Labor Day, the overhead was just too great. Adding to the resort's woes, the loss of the grand lodge left an indelible hole in the resort, resulting in a continual downhill slide of guests.

The husband-wife team of Don Eastvold and Ginny Simms acquired the resort in 1962 and immediately embarked on an impressive plan to develop the resort into a self-sufficient community.

Eastvold was not a novice in the resort development business. He had partnered with land development groups in Washington and California. Through these experiences, he recognized the prospect for recreational land development at Breezy Point.

Breezy Point Estates

Ginny Simms was a singer in the "big band" era. She recorded for several record companies and co-starred as a singer and actress in over 25 movies.

The flamboyant couples' arrival at Breezy Point Lodge brought a renewed sense of optimism to the area. Locals, whose seasonal employment at the Lodge had been uncertain at best, were cautiously optimistic by the announcements of ambitious building and land development plans. They were promised that the creation of neighborhoods and the sale of residential lots would transform the area into a year-round community.



Ginny Simms and Don Eastvold

Adding to the style and pizzazz was the new name, "Breezy Point Estates".

Under the supervision of Jerry Lenz, an Eastvold

partner, the building program was fast and furious. First on the scene was the Lodge Apartments, a 50-unit condominium on the site of the former Lodge. This was the first condominium in Minnesota. Buyers of the individual units had the option of renting the units to vacationers through a management agreement with Eastvold.

The nerve center of the resort was the new administration building, complete with post office.

May 1, 1964, saw the opening of the new Marina with a bar and dining area for 220 guests. In addition to a grocery store, the lower level contained a full-service marina store offering tackle and boat sales and rentals.



Marina Bar & Restaurant

The golf course grew from 9 to 18 holes and a 9-hole pitch and putt course was built near the supper club.

The Antlers bar, which was within the Supper Club, dance hall and employee dining room were totally renovated, taking on a new life as the Supper Club. It reopened on May 22, 1964 with a seating capacity of 500. In addition, the club had an off-sale liquor store and golf pro shop.

This was the '60s and America was in the midst of the "British Invasion", with the Beatles and Rolling Stones topping the hit list. Nevertheless, crowds still flocked to the resort to hear the big band music from such greats as Tommy Dorsey, Glen Miller, Sy Zentner and Count Basie. Russ Carlyle headlined in July 1965. or the famous big bands of the day, including Tommy Dorsey and Glenn Miller.

Many of the top "Big Bands" of the '30s played into the wee hours, exciting the Lodge's guests. Extravagant weddings were commonplace and the Lodge became a favorite for honeymooners.

The resort pools built in the 1950s have been filled in but the colorful concrete patios are still visible in what is now the employee parking area behind the Conference Center.



Resort swimming pools

The Golfview Terrace condominium, with 100 units, was completed on August 10. Built in the shape of an A, it boasted a kidney-shaped swimming pool in the center.

To call Breezy Point Estates "bustling" would have been a gross understatement. In addition to the growing numbers of tourists, the resort and surrounding areas were overtaken by swarms of construction workers, surveyors, heavy equipment operators, and salespeople courting potential customers for condo units and home sites.

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To the locals, the revival of the resort was beyond belief. The good times were finally here to stay!

By September 1965, the Beachside, Surfside, Bayside and Waldenheim condominiums were ready for sale. Forty-two log duplex homes, many along the golf course fairways, were finished and sold.

Simms busied herself with the interior design and furnishings of all resort facilities. Assisting her was the Powers department store in Minneapolis. Her relationship with the Powers firm would later prove to play a pivotal role in the resort's fortunes.

Eastvold created an island by dredging a winding, 4000-foot canal. Lining the canal, another 130 residential lots were sold.

Eastvold sold to private parties the 52 cabins that had been built by Captain Billy. Like the condominiums, he then managed the cabins for tourist rentals.

Eastvold wanted this new community to have a church and offered the land and \$10,000 to any church that wanted to undertake the project. The northern district of the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church accepted the offer and, with a total building expense of \$35,000, completed construction in 1964. The massive stone steps leading up to the church were built by Captain Billy in anticipation of a new golf clubhouse. Fawcett died before he could carry out the plan.

Recognizing the growing popularity of private aviation, Eastvold built a 2600-foot lighted airstrip. Although still in use today, it is privately owned and no longer lighted.



First condos in Minnesota under construction

Building lot and condominium sales were booming. Locals recognized the salesmen from the resort by their flashy suits, cars and gold jewelry. To the conservative residents of the area, they resembled the pit bosses of Las Vegas.

In July 1964, Eastvold claimed that of the 1,300 lots offered for sale less than 500 remained and they would likely be sold out by Labor Day. At completion, he estimated there would be about 2,000 lots and that they already had built 15 miles of residential streets. The total land area involved in the project was over 1,200 acres.



The ski chalet, which evolved into Four Season followed by Charlie's Saloon & Rib Joint, Primetime Charlie's and currently Primetime.

The fall of 1964 saw the development of a ski complex. The chalet hosted a restaurant, bar and an up-scale ski shop offering the latest in clothing and equipment. The chalet is now the Primetime Restaurant.

A riding stable on the southwest corner of County 11 and Ranchette Drive opened in 1965 with 40

horses. Extensive riding trails meandered through the woods in what is now Whitebirch RV & Camping Resort. Plans were announced in early 1965 for an equestrian development. Off-lake land was purchased and reserved for people seeking both a home for themselves and a horse. As an inducement, a free horse was offered with some lots!

Across from the Marina, the new recreation cen-



Traditional Clubhouse

ter included a bowling alley and the "TEEN-AGO-GO" teen center. A July 1965 newspaper ad hyped nightly entertainment and invited "All Young Ladies and Gentlemen (12 to 20)" to see the "Coal Streamers" from Palm Springs, CA. Eastvold's son, Carl, was their organ player. Admission was \$1.00 and soft drinks were \$.10.

Mundo Villegas, a Mexican cliff diver, choreo-



The Teen Center & bowling alley which later was developed into the resort's first convention center.

graphed and performed in daily water-skiing shows at the resort. Crowds were awed by the performers' daring jumps over an elaborate ramp in the bay.

While Eastvold and Simms concentrated on developing countless amenities for their guests they didn't ignore their own accommodations. They built what was then one of the resort's most elegant homes, replete with a swimming pool. Powers department store touted the home in a 1965 newspaper ad as a "product of Powers home planning staff" and claimed the home would be featured in that fall's House Beautiful magazine. Now known as the Governors House, it stands on the street leading to the Traditional Golf Course clubhouse.

The high-flying days of Don Eastvold and Ginny Simms came crashing down in September 1965. Their explosive growth of Breezy Point Estates had pushed money out the door faster than it was coming in.

Creditors were continually assured that everything was fine with the business and then watched helplessly when the bill payments suddenly stopped. Payroll checks were issued but could only be cashed at the resort because the resort's bank accounts had been closed.

An article in the September 21, 1965, *Brainerd Dispatch* reported that Breezy Point Estates was negotiating the sale of the marina, supper club and administration building. Jerry Lenz was quoted that Breezy Point Estates "has not and is not selling out." In an attempt to calm nerves he said the developers expected to spend the next 5 to 7 years developing the approximately 3,000 acres which comprised Breezy Point Estates.

The importance of the resort to the lakes area was evident in a lengthy September 25 *Brainerd Dispatch* article that delved into the financial condition.

Countering the bad news, the article went on to report the amazing building campaign and Eastvold's plan for recovery.

Although the Breezy Point Estates business had closed, several independent businesses at and near the resort remained open. Owners of the Marina Sport Shop and Grocery Store vowed to stay open as long as there were customers. Three condominium buildings were open and available for rental. Winter reservations were being taken. The gas station at the airport, and the golf course also remained open.

The Brainerd-Pelican Lake Development Corporation raised another glimmer of hope on November 5, 1965 when the *Brainerd Dispatch* reported a possible purchase of the resort. The owners of the Hopkins House Motel in the Twin Cities had enlisted Brainerd-Pelican to negotiate the deal. A myriad of liens and mortgages complicated matters and became the central issues in the negotiations.

At the end of 1965, no further word was heard about a possible sale of the resort. News was made on December 20, however, when 3 creditors sought to force Breezy Point Estates into involuntary bankruptcy.

An announcement on May 27, confirmed that Lloyd Brandvold, a Twin-Cities businessman, had won 2 one-year leases of the resort to operate it during the summers of 1966 and 1967.

His plan was to open for business on Memorial Day, only 3 days away. Records aren't clear as to whether Brandvold made the Memorial Day opening. The resort did, in fact, open for the summer of 1966.

A 2-page ad in the July 1966 *Brainerd Dispatch* gives the impression that all was back to normal. Businesses included Breezy Point Airport, Breezy Point Supper Club, Restaurant, Antlers Bar, Breezy Point Bottle Shop, Lake Queen Homes, Breezy Point Sport Shop, Rita's Beauty Salon, Sugar-N-Spice, Red Barn Riding Stables, 9-hole and Par 3 Golf Courses and the Breezy Point Real Estate Center.

The Marina Restaurant & Bar, the Supper Club and the front nine of the golf course were open from Memorial Day to Labor Day. The lower level of the restaurant (later becoming the Dockside Lounge) was operated independently selling bait and offering boat sales and rentals.

Nevertheless, Brandvold was able to attract a good number of summer vacationers. Name entertainers packed the supper club at night, while golf and boating on Pelican Lake filled the days.

Hopkins House Breezy Point Resort

The resort closed for the season in 1967 with a dim prospect of reopening.

March of 1968 saw another twist in the fortunes of Breezy Point Estates. Nine owners of the Hopkins House, a Twin-Cities restaurant, successfully negotiated with the trustees the purchase of the resort.



Included in the sale were the Marina Restaurant & Bar, supper club, grocery store, golf back nine, gas station, airport, 4 units in the Lodge Apartments and 47 of the 101 rooms in the Golfview Terrace hotel. The condominium owners or the court trustees held the rest of the buildings.

The resort was renamed Hopkins House Breezy Point Resort.

The task ahead of them was daunting. Their only real exposure to the resort was as past guests for 4th of July celebrations and other busy summer weekends. Hidden from their view was the actual condition of the facilities.

Hopkins House's purchase of the resort signaled
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the return to the resort of Dave Gravidahl, now general manager of Breezy Point Resort. He had been working for Hopkins House in the Twin Cities.

Realizing that the tourist season didn't get into full swing until the latter part of June, most resorts only operated their restaurants on weekends until late June and then would be open 7 days per week through Labor Day. Hopkins House, however, staffed the Supper Club with cooks, bartenders, waiters, busboys and musicians for the entire summer season. As expected, weekends were busy but midweek in June found no customers.

Recognizing the growing popularity of winter sports, the owners built an indoor/outdoor swimming pool in what is now the recreation center. Unfortunately, the extreme cold of Minnesota's winters resulted in the closure of the outdoor portion of the pool.



Indoor-outdoor pool

Several meeting rooms were created in the teenage nightclub and became host to the 3 nights per week Don Stultz production of the Old Log Theater.

The 1968 summer season business was dismal. The dark public perception of a bankrupt resort was a never-ending obstacle. Frequent and flashy ads, both in the immediate area and the Twin-Cities, were run to attract new guests. Word slowly began to spread that there was a rebirth at the resort.

The resort closed for the season in September. As an experiment, and accompanied by an advertising campaign, it reopened for Christmas. The results were surprising. There was a moderate winter market that, with the growing interest in snowmobiling, would later prove viable.

A winter operation would not be trouble-free. None of these facilities were envisioned for winter use. The insulation was not adequate for sub-zero temperatures, water pipes were prone to freezing and heating systems were overloaded. One observer noted that fuel trucks were often lined up to satisfy the voracious appetites of the furnaces.

The 1969 summer season was a disaster. Even though longtime guests who had given up on the place were returning, their numbers were few.



Lloyd Peterson and Friends

The popularity of the big bands that had wowed guests since the early 20's was waning. Recognizing this, rock-n-roll bands were added to the venue and younger crowds invaded the resort on weekends. Efforts to provide "something for everyone" showed promise. Bands like the Swinging Ambassadors and Williams & Ree (still headliners in the casino circuit)

performed in the Supper Club. The hot spot in the resort was the new dance floor and bandstand in the remodeled Marina Lounge featuring, among others, the Italian Show Band, Quasiar, Rainbow, Asian Society and The Jet & Toni. The room was loud, dark and exciting. Partiers in their 20s, 30s and 40s from the resort and the entire Brainerd Lakes area swarmed to the lounge.

Unfortunately, the expectations and demands of the guests were changing. Gone were the carefree, easy-going days of the 50's and 60's. The war in Viet Nam and the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bobby Kennedy had sobered the public's perspective. The resort's challenge was to create for its guests a few days of diversion and relief from their worries and concerns.

The resort remained closed during the winter of 1969/70. Plans for the next summer were underway.

Even though the past season's business was weak, the 9 owners seized the opportunity for growth and embarked on an ambitious building and renovation program.

They recognized the inadequacies of the Marina restaurant's dining capacity, as well as the need for additional guest rooms and recreational facilities.

While the Supper Club would continue to feature the more formal dining and ballroom music with show bands, the Marina was envisioned to be the gathering place for the younger crowd seeking nighttime excitement without the coat and tie that was customary at the Supper Club.

That winter saw major changes. Fully one-half of the shopping center, which is now the Breezy Center, was converted into 5 two-room suites and 8 guest rooms, complete with air conditioning.

During the heat of the summer, guests found the lakeside-screened porch of the Marina restaurant unbearable. One local observer remarked, "The guests stayed away in droves."

Thus, the restaurant was totally remodeled. The screened porch was enclosed and integrated with the old dining room. The sloping floor, originally designed for the runoff of rain coming through the screens, retained its well-known pitch. Guests unfamiliar with the Marina's past wondered if the building would gradually topple into the lake.

The bar area also received an overhaul. The straight bar was replaced with a horseshoe shaped bar, tripling it's seating capacity. A bandstand with an overhead lighting system was built and a dance floor installed.

The most impressive project that winter was the new swimming pool. Many of the resorts in the area had swimming pools but nothing like this.

Unheard of at the time, particularly in northern Minnesota, construction started on an indoor/outdoor pool. The indoor portion is where the Recreation Center pool is today. The outdoor section extended into what is now the patio and parking lot. Guests could swim under the wall, which extended down to just over the water level, from one section to the other. This proved to be a hit with the guests but became a maintenance and heating nightmare for the Resort.

Marketing efforts were bolstered. The Resort operated 2 year-round reservations offices, one at the Resort and the other at the Hopkins House offices in the Twin Cities.

An innovation at the time, and a first for Minnesota resorts, a toll-free 800-telephone number provided to potential customers a direct link to the Resort. Although it appeared "seamless" to the customer, the call would go to the Hopkins House office where an operator, by means of a switchboard, would plug in the wire to connect the caller to the Resort.

Attention was also turned to conference business, a yet untapped source of mid-week activity. Sales calls on companies and associations made some inroads but the first order of business was an overall assessment of what was needed to bring the

facilities up to an acceptable condition. The list seemed endless.

Mundane items such as cracked switch plates were accompanied by missing furniture and, in several units, missing water pumps for the sewer system. Painting, both inside and out, was started. The back nine of the golf course was cleared of weeds, reseeded and groomed.

The resort reopened with great fanfare as word-of-mouth which spread about Hopkins House became the greatest sales tool. The summer of 1970 saw conference groups such as the Law Explorers, Minnesota LP Gas Assoc., Minneapolis-St. Paul Traffic Club, MASSP and meetings of the Buick, Chevrolet, Pontiac and Oldsmobile, zone offices. Many of the groups have returned to the resort season after season. The record is set by the MASSP who continue using the Resort today.

The relationship between the Hopkins House Motor Hotel and the Resort was instrumental in overcoming some early conference obstacles. Many companies limited their employee's attendance to conferences held in the Twin Cities. The Resort was able to host the gatherings but have the billings generated by the Hopkins House Motor Hotel, thus comforting the nervous accountants.

Other groups had a prohibition against alcohol being served to their attendees. The invoices for these events indicated an incredible amount of food service but no alcohol charges.



Hopkins House billboard

The 1970 summer season began with a bang as Pequot Lakes and the Resort hosted Governor Harold LeVander's "Governor's Fishing Opener". In addition to the many volunteers, Marv Koep, through the Nisswa Guides League, provided professional fishing guides such as Al and Ron Lindner, Harry Van Dorn and Max Slocum.

The widespread press coverage of the "Opener" couldn't have been timed any better. Suddenly, the public awareness that the Resort was, in fact, open for business created a renewed interest in their selection of Breezy Point as a vacation destination.

As the summer progressed, weekends saw capacity crowds at the Marina. The "Italian Show Band" drew in the excitement seekers, a 4-piece band straight from Italy. The band developed a reputation, not only for good music, but also as one reveler remarked, "The ladies love them...and they love the ladies!" Informed escorts did their best to keep their dates away from the band members during the breaks.

Advertising began to play a bigger role in the Resort's overall marketing efforts. TV ads were run in the Twin Cities on Channel 11, then an independent station. The ads appeared during the station's afternoon Mel Jazz Show, an all-movie format.

The biggest challenge facing management was the attraction of midweek traffic. Two plans to fill the Sunday to Thursday drought were created. The "Golfer's Holiday" included 3 nights lodging and 4 days of golf for \$29.95 per person. The "Unweekender" package included 2 nights lodging, 2 breakfasts and a steak or walleye dinner.

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The Resort also initiated the "Billy Fawcett Golf Tournament" over the Labor Day weekend. Billy Fawcett's son, Roscoe, presented the winner's trophy.

The packages and special events became very popular, boosting the Resort's revenue although it still had been a tough summer season.

The Resort closed in mid-September and reopened for the weekends from Christmas into March.

A long, cold winter, though, was just around the corner. The Resort was operated on weekends from Christmas through March of 1971, capitalizing on the growing snowmobiling business. The snowmobiles of this era lacked the reliability of today's machines and many guests found themselves supporting the local repair shops. On the positive side, the Resort realized a brisk bar business serving "copious amounts of adult beverages" to those unfortunate souls waiting for the repairs to be completed.

The void of guests during the weekdays didn't slow the furnaces' gigantic appetite for fuel. It was a struggle to get the weekend revenue to outweigh the weekday expenses but the exposure of the winter guests to the Resort's summer amenities built a solid return business.

The Resort closed at the end of March and reopened for the 1971 summer season in the latter part of May.

The Supper Club was the nightlife focal point. In an attempt to be all-things-to-all-people, three venues provided the entertainment.

The first, and most elaborate, was the Chandelier Room. Here, show and dance bands performed along with comedy acts. The Swinging Ambassadors and Gene White & Friends were but two of the many bands entertaining the guests. Amongst the many comedy acts, Williams & Ree, who billed themselves as the "Indian and the white man" and still perform nationally, provided the laughs.

The advent of auto racing at Donnybrook Speedway, which was later renamed Brainerd International Raceway, brought the big names in racing to the Resort. A. J. Foyt, Carrol Shelby, Jackie Stewart and Paul Newman called the Resort home during the racing weekends. Dick Smothers, of Smothers Brothers fame, was an avid race fan who also stayed at the Resort.



Playboy Bunnies appearing at BIR called the Fawcett House home.

Over the next few seasons, marketing efforts were successfully focused on groups. One of the largest, which had the Resort bursting at its seams, was the Submarine Veterans of World War II. At 700 strong, including spouses and three admirals, it placed the Resort firmly within the ranks of the major Midwest conference destinations.

Other groups included the 3rd Marine Division Association, Council 32 of the Teamsters and two groups of 250 people of the Rochester Division of IBM. True to its earned reputation for white shirts as the mandatory employee uniform, the IBM attendees worked and partied in their starched white shirts.

1972 saw another change in ownership. The original Hopkins House partners reorganized with addi-

tional partnerships of the Resort going to Dave Gravdahl, today's general manager, and Jim Harmon.

Harmon became general manager and Gravdahl was responsible for sales.

The forerunner of today's Whitebirch, Inc. was created with an ownership stake of 50% by Hopkins House investors and 50% by Jerry Lenz, who had been a partner of Don Eastvold's during his ownership of the Resort in the mid-60's. Whitebirch developers then purchased from Brownlee Cote, the owner of Grandview Lodge, 2700 acres of land adjacent to the Resort.

Their initial plans included the development of an additional 18-hole golf course, an RV resort cluster development of 5000 campsites and the resurrection of the defunct ski resort that is today operated as a snowtubing hill behind the Primetime Restaurant.

Although big plans were being made for the future of the Resort and surrounding area, the early 70s saw few, if any, construction or development projects.

Maintaining the day-to-day operations and balancing the sparse winters with the slow growing summer business kept management's focus on the accounting books.

Two gas pumps for boat fueling on the dock directly in front of the Dockside Bar often presented anxious moments for the employees. Dockside guests who had possibly over-imbibed and wanted a closer look at the bay, strolled the deck by the pumps while waving their lit cigarettes in their hands. Shooing them back into the bar was a part of the employees' job description.



Gas pumps on the dock outside of the Marina.

The challenges for the Resort continued through 1974. On the one hand, the summer business had seen modest growth. Outside influences always seemed to happen at the wrong time. The country was gripped by concerns over the Watergate scandal and gasoline shortages.

Consumer confidence had ebbed and, along with it, the tourist industry began to suffer.

This was not the ideal time to be building the Resort business.

Hopkins House Breezy Point Resort closed for the in mid-September 1974 and reopened shortly before Christmas for the winter.

The Resort had become a popular snowmobile destination and while the winter operation had not yet turned the corner to profitability, it filled the revenue gap between the summer tourist seasons.

The Resort became the first Minnesota resort to have color TVs when it purchased 76 sets at a cost of \$412 each. While it was a huge expenditure at the time, the investment would prove to be visionary.

The Resort purchased the Sportsraft Boat Marina in the spring of 1975 and offered fuel, bait and the rentals of sailboats, speedboats, fishing boats and pontoons. The aviation pumps were soon removed when it was discovered that airplane activity was almost nonexistent.

The vacated space that had been the boat marina under the Marina restaurant was gutted and developed into what would become the Dockside bar. Furnished with a bar, it became a popular hangout for local boaters and guests.

An attempt to accentuate the golfing opportunities at the Resort had overwhelming results. The 1975 Breezy Point Celebrity Golf Tournament drew over one hundred real and "want-to-be" golfers to the Traditional course. The list of celebrities was long and included Minnesota Vikings Paul Krause, Mick Tingelhoff, Bob Lurtsema, Dave Osborne, Grady Alderman, Minnesota Twin Jim Perry, Minnesota North Star Cesar Maniago and professional boxer Scott LeDoux, "The Fighting Frenchman".

The nurturing of group business was paying off. Returning business conferences started to fill the calendar.

The Resort was gaining a reputation as a great golf destination. The favorite golf package in 1976 was the "Budget Vacation". It included a 4-day/3-night stay with unlimited golf, breakfasts at the Marina restaurant and dinners at the Supper Club, all at a per person double occupancy rate of \$79 mid-week and \$89 on weekends.

Seizing an opportunity to expand its entertainment options, the Resort purchased the Four Seasons bar, now Primetime Food & Spirits. Walter Broich, a super-salesman and promoter, had created in the Four Seasons a magnet for the younger crowd. He "packed'em-in" with Terry Masters, a one-man band.

The Resort had now placed itself in a very enviable marketing position. The golf packages were a success, the group business continued to grow, and the entertainment choices met the demands of all age groups.

In spite of the summer successes, winter was once again casting its shadow over the long-term financial viability of the Resort.

Spirits at the Resort were high in the spring of 1977. The advance bookings for the summer season were at an all-time high. The season's entertainment had been booked, including several "big bands" for the Chandelier Room at the Supper Club.

One of the more unusual groups hosted by the resort was the John Deere snowmobile racing team. They used the conference center for their shop, worked on their machines and competed in races across the northern U.S. and Canada.

New shuttle service between the Resort and the Four Seasons restaurant provided for the guests an



The 1976 John Deere Enduro Team. Seated is Brian Nelson, the winner of the 1976 International 500.

alternative to driving after "living it up" at the restaurant.

In mid-June Jerry Dockendorf, a wholesale appliance distributor, had provided area appliance dealers with a two-day stay at the Resort in order to demonstrate the latest in home appliance products. Although the Supper Club had not been opened to the public for the season, it provided the ideal venue for Dockendorf's appliance display.

The spring weather had been exceedingly dry. The day of Dockendorf's show, storm clouds on the horizon promised much needed rain. Shortly after noon, the storm hit, bringing a terrific show of lightning over the Resort.

Disaster struck!

A bolt of lightning hit the kitchen wall of the Supper Club, lighting up the electrical cabinet serving the entire building. Dave Gravdahl, today's general manager, was just driving into the parking lot

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and saw the lightning strike. He rushed inside to find Orv Hagan, the Supper Club chef, running with a fire extinguisher toward the electrical cabinet. The sparking and fire from the cabinet were so intense; he couldn't get near enough put the fire out. Dockendorf and his guests were evacuated without injury as the fire spread. The Supper Club was a total loss.

The start of the summer season was just around the corner. Arrangements were hastily made to fill the void left by the Supper Club. The 4 Seasons became the interim fine-dining location, and a kitchen was built in the Convention Center. Area resorts volunteered their help and supplies.

The loss of the Supper Club's "Chandelier Room" forced the cancellation of the big bands for the season. The Resort's fear that it would now lose the conference business they'd been so fiercely fighting for was unfounded. Most groups stayed in spite of the loss of the Supper Club. In fact, the resort landed the Minnesota Candy and Tobacco Association after pursuing them for nine years.

The spring of 1977 brought to the Resort a new face. Bob Spizzo, today's owner of the Resort, arrived from San Carlos, Mexico. He and his family had been living there while he developed a resort community.

His original agreement with the Hopkins House partners would have him remain in Breezy Point for three years to assist in the development of 3000 acres of land. The development was projected to include the Whitebirch Golf Course, 3000 campsites, hundreds of home sites and the start of a timeshare development.

Spizzo's interest was not in the Resort itself but in the residential and recreational development of the 2600 acres adjacent to the Resort.

Whitebirch was involved in a legal battle with a citizens group, Crow Wing Environmental Protection Agency, Inc. (CWEPA). Whitebirch in 1974 had proposed the development of a campground containing as many as 3000 campsites.

CWEPA was formed to monitor the development of the campground and exerted its influence to limit development where environmental concerns had been raised. An agreement between Whitebirch and CWEPA was reached whereby Whitebirch was able to develop 750 campsites.

This was the first campground development in Minnesota incorporating individually owned, rather than rented or leased, "condominium camp sites".

In 1981, Spizzo attempted to persuade the Hopkins House partners, along with Jerry Lenz, to develop at the Resort a timeshare development.

Hopkins countered with an offer of both their

Breezy Point Resort

Whitebirch interest and the entire Resort. The deal was struck and after some complex bank financing and leveraging, Spizzo and Lenz found themselves the newest in a long line of Breezy Point Resort owners.

Before the ink on the deal with Hopkins House had dried Whitebirch was further leveraged with the purchase of 2600 acres from Brownlee Cote. He had had a working relationship with Eastvold and Simms whereby he would sign over to them individual lots as they were sold.



With the encouragement of the City of Breezy Point and a few bankers, a leveraged buyout was completed in February of 1981 whereby Lenz and Spizzo acquired total ownership of Whitebirch, Inc. Fortunately for the Resort, Dave Gravdahl agreed to stay on as general manager, a position he retains to this day.

Breezy Point Resort had become a subsidiary of Whitebirch, Inc.

Spizzo took on the responsibility of designing, building, selling and managing the timeshare program, which was the first such development in Minnesota.

A master plan for the "New Breezy Point" was developed for the Resort and surrounding 2,700 acres.

Myron Landecker, of Landecker & Associates, was the creative genius behind the project who, with his team of professionals, pulled the entire development together. They knew how to travel the difficult road of permitting, environmental impact statements, legal issues and approvals of numerous city, county, state and federal governmental bodies.

At a time that many smaller resorts were closing or selling out to subdivide, Breezy Point Resort was developing a comprehensive 25-year multi-million-dollar expansion.

These plans included a new 18-hole Whitebirch Championship Golf Course and clubhouse, indoor pool, new Marina II Restaurant & Dockside Lounge, sports facility, a 184-unit High Village project (of which 40 were built) with tennis courts, indoor pools and expanded boat marina.

The sleeping giant awoke in spite of the ups and downs of many other fast-growing organizations.

On the one hand, the Resort's name was well-known. On the other hand, it was not only tired and in need of extensive updating, it was still a summer only business that would require year-round operations to support the timeshare owner's expectations. Further, the Resort was still suffering the stigma of the Eastvold-Simms bankruptcy and mismanagement.

Nevertheless, Whitebirch created an ambitious 25-year business plan. Working with the City of Breezy Point and all of the regulatory agencies, Whitebirch moved forward. The initial hurdle was the creation of an environment impact statement (EIS), reportedly Minnesota's first. With the able help of Jim Harmon, a former Hopkins House partner, the expensive and time consuming EIS was approved.

The wide scale of Whitebirch's development plan could not have been implemented without the City's construction of a municipal sewer system in the

1970s. Whitebirch worked closely with then Mayor Gordon Thrane to obtain the appropriate regulatory approvals and funding to make the sewer system a reality.

From its first days of planning the sewer project was locally a very controversial topic. Opponents of Whitebirch's development plans had quickly united, but their objections failed to stop the sewer system's construction.

The Whitebirch/Breezy Point management team, headed by CEO Bob Spizzo, survived the economic downturn and in order to gain total control of the massive development plans Spizzo bought out Lenz' share and became the sole owner.

It was now up to Spizzo and his dedicated team, some of whom are still working for Whitebirch, to save the fractured organization and regain the trust of its lenders and customers alike.

Following its timeshare master plan, Whitebirch pushed on by designing, constructing, marketing and managing several hundred timeshare units. Each unit was sold to 51 individual owners, all of whom would pay real estate taxes and contribute to the local economy on a year-round basis.

Coinciding with Whitebirch's cash hungry building program, the economy took a turn for the worse with inflation and skyrocketing interest rates. The 144 High Village units and Marina II restaurant projects were indefinitely put-on hold when two of the Resort's lead banks closed.

Consultants, architects and lenders were at first filled with doubt but agreed to a pilot effort of con-



Original clubhouse at the Whitebirch Golf Course

verting into timeshare units several of the original log cabins along the Traditional Golf Course.

The cabins each had 2 units; a studio unit on one side and a 2-bedroom unit on the other side. Each cabin was gutted and stripped down to the bare walls. Architects, interior decorators and contractors transformed the old cabins into 2 and 3-bedroom homes. Since they would be year-round homes, insulation was added as well as fireplaces, decks and hot tubs. They became modern resort homes with an emphasis on rustic elegance.

The State of Minnesota had no regulations on the marketing and sale of timeshares and up until the development at Breezy Point had no need for them.

With the assistance one of the most prestigious law firm in the Twin Cities, the necessary regulatory documents were constructed and presented to the State for its adoption of the regulations. Upon the State's approval, marketing and sales efforts began for the initial units, named the Chalets.

Spizzo contacted Resort Condominium International (RCI) and convinced them that northern Minnesota is a most desirable destination for Midwesterners.

The next step was the hiring and training of a sales force to promote the new timeshare product. The first sales office was in the log building at the Red Barn Riding Stables and then moved to the Fawcett House. The need for more salespeople grew and a new office was built for that purpose. (It has since been converted into the dormitory at the Ice Arena.)

The sales staff grew to 100, handling campground, residential lot and timeshare sales.

These modest beginnings grew into what is today the largest timeshare operation in the Midwest with

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Whitebirch RV and Camping Resort

The original cost of \$3,000 per site, the value of which has increased almost ten-fold, with each owner paying real estate taxes and benefiting the local business community.

The camping resort has five comfort stations, two swimming pools, tennis courts, baseball field, game room, playground equipment and guarded entrances.

Along with development of the camping resorts, Whitebirch continued its development plans for approximately 2,600 acres within the City of Breezy Point. At that time few people realized that there actually was a city called Breezy Point.

The City of Breezy Point had fallen on hard times following the devastating foreclosures during the Simms/Eastvold era of the 1960s. The inherited shady reputation haunted the Resort for many years to come.

In 1980, the City Council and the Planning & Zoning Commission met with Spizzo and encouraged him to remain and assist in the redevelopment of the city.

Spizzo's experience in timeshare development and sales in Mexico convinced him that there was a timeshare market in the Midwest. The challenge would be convincing everyone else including the bankers.

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over 12,000 owners. While many timeshare operations were started by developers who sold out the units and left for other ventures, White Birch has designed, built and marketed the units and continues to maintain and manage them.

Each timeshare complex is independently owned by the respective timeshare association. The board of directors of each association is comprised of elected timeshare owners in that complex.

Today the timeshare operation at Breezy Point

Resort includes over 12,000 owners, the largest timeshare operation in the Midwest.

Since the Spizzo family's 1981 purchase of the Resort, attention has not only been placed on timeshare but on other developments.

Other White Birch developments include the Conference Center, 18-hole White Birch Championship Golf Course, 750 deeded campsites in the White Birch RV & Camping Resort, Antlers Restaurant, Breezy Point Ice Arena, Dockside/Marina II/

Lakeside Ballroom, acquisition of Deacon's Lodge Championship Golf Course/Palmer's Grill, CRMC Breezy Point Clinic and GuidePoint Pharmacy, and White Birch Village, the active-adult townhome development along the fairway of the White Birch Golf Course.

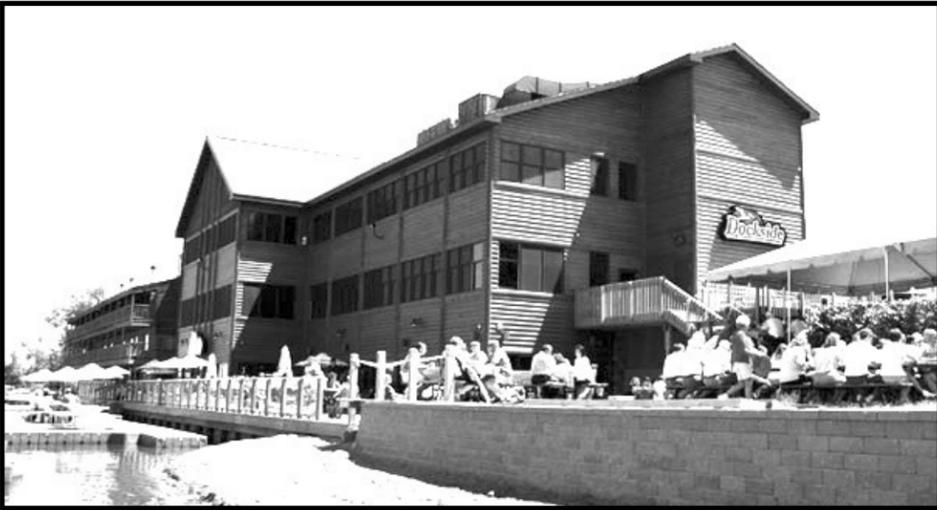
In the words of Bob Spizzo, "Although my dedicated team has accomplished many great milestones over the last 40 years, I'm firmly convinced that the best is yet to come!"



CRMC Breezy Point Clinic and GuidePoint Pharmacy



White Birch Village



Dockside/Marina II/Lakeside Ballroom complex



Deacon's Lodge clubhouse and Palmer's Grill



Conference Center



Breezy Point Ice Arena



One Hundred Years and It's Only Just Begun!