



Big Birch Lake Association NEWSLETTER

No. 159. July 2025

BBLA Board of Directors

Craig Tweedale, Pres. Area J
Kevin Costello, Treas. Area C
Matt Everding, V Pres. Area F
Jay Anderson Area I
Mark Erdmann Area G
Blake Johnson. Area D
Deb Johnson Director At Large
Brandon Kelly Area E
Bill Lieder Director At Large
Hans Mische Director At Large
Grant Niehaus Director At Large
Jeanne Niehaus Director At Large
Gary Rothstein Area H
Mike Sadlowsky Area B
Steve Thelen Area A

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The Big Birch Lake Association
Newsletter is an official publication
of the Big Birch Lake Association,
Inc. PO Box 342, Grey Eagle, MN
563336

Craig Tweedale, President
Robert Kutter, Secretary/newsletter
editor

Mission Statement

The purpose of the Big Birch Lake Association shall be to improve and protect water quality, to advance the propagation and habitat of fish and to protect the welfare of all wildlife in Big Birch Lake and adjacent areas.

President's Letter

Hello, and I'm so happy summer is here and in full swing.

As the weather warms up, **aquatic vegetation** is becoming more prevalent around your shore line. With that said, you are probably trying to make sure your beach is clear and you have a navigable pathway from your dock. There are many ways to accomplish this. Some of you may use hydraulic jets. Please be aware that they cannot be used in any way that disturbs the bottom of a waterbody or destroys plants. They need to be placed at the surface of the water. Per the DNR, "they write out more citations for this infraction than any other violation".

What can we do to keep our Loons safe? By the time you read this, all the loon chicks probably have hatched. Please take special care when you see the loons especially the chicks as they learn to navigate life. As we all know, the Loons are a protected bird. Here are just a few suggestions from the DNR. 1 Keep your distance of 150 feet or greater. Give loons a wide distance to feed and care for their young. 2. Listen for loons. If you hear a loon start to call, you are too close. Move away. 3. Chicks may look like they are abandoned, but a very high percentage of time they are not, you just do not see the parents. Please do not try to rescue them, call your local DNR office. 4. Report harassment. Harassment of wildlife is against the law. Please report it to your local DNR office. You can find contact information at mndnr.gov.

Many of you are probably aware of the **new Minnesota Boating Law that took effect on July 1, 2025**. The new law will require boaters age 21 and younger to have a water craft operators permit to drive a boat or jet ski. You can get a permit for a onetime fee of \$34.95 by going to the DNR website and taking an online boater's safety course and passing the final exam.

Lastly if any of our readers have any stories they would like to share or topics that they would like us to cover, we would like to publish those if we can. Please contact us at bigbirchlakeasso@gmail.com. I hope everyone has a safe and wonderful summer.

Craig Tweedale, President, Big Birch Lake Association.

Annual meeting August 16/guest speaker, Kutter

The annual meeting of the Big Birch Lake Association will be August 13, at 8 a.m. at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Grey Eagle. The agenda will include reports from various committees, and the election of directors. All of the incumbent directors up for election to a three-year term have agreed to run for re-election.

Robert Kutter will be the guest speaker about the history of Big Birch Lake. While researching for his book, A History of Grey Eagle, he found material that was not included in the 2007 book on the history of the lake written by Fran and Mil Voelker.
meeting continues on page 2

meeting continued from page 1.

Association members have an opportunity to nominate candidates from the floor provided they comply with the association by-laws which state: "Nominations may be made from the floor at the annual meeting provided that notice of the intent thereof has been given to the president or vice president or any member of the nominating committee at least 10 days before the annual membership meeting."

The directors running for reelection are Steve Thelen, Brandon Kelly, Gary Rothstein, Jay Anderson, and Hans Mische.



Obituary of lake resident

Terry Kotsmith, age 83 of Foley passed away at his home surrounded by his family on February 24, 2025. Terrence Joseph Kotsmith was born October 6, 1941 in St. Cloud, Minnesota to William and Gladys (Bauerly) Kotsmith. He graduated from Foley High School, class of 1959. He attended Dunwoody Institute obtaining his degree in construction management and carpentry. He co-owned and operated the Foley Lumber Company with his brother, Bill for over 40 years. He married Sharon Bohlig on September 2, 1961 at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Grey Eagle. He was a past member of the Foley Fire Department; the Foley Jaycee's; past school board member for the Foley Area School and St. John's Area School; Foley Knights of Columbus; Life member of the NRA and Foley Fun Days Grand Marshal. Terry had many hobbies and enjoyed hunting and fishing, woodworking; music and dancing, trapshooting and traveling with Sharon and their many friends. Terry obtained his pilot's license and flew for several years. Mostly, Terry enjoyed his family and spending many days at the lake. He was a life member of St. John's Catholic Church where he served as usher for many years.

He is survived by his wife, Sharon, Foley and children: Lisa (Curt) Sellman, Andover; Randy (Karen), Foley; Nicole (Marc) Mumm, Foley, 8 grandchildren: Mitchell (Kendra) Sellman, Kyle (Taylor) Sellman, Nicholas (Rachel) Kotsmith, Alysa (Nathaniel) Jimenez, Katelynn (Chad) Mueller, Alexandra (Noah) Seberg, Grant (Brianna) Mumm and Brock Mumm as well as 12 great grandchildren and his brother and sisters: Bill, Oak Park; Sally Borgert, Sauk Rapids; Kaylee (Jim) Auers, Cross Lake and Ginger (Buzz) Weisser of Blaine. He was preceded in death by his parents and sisters, Sheila Garceau and Mary Jane Grow.

Big Birch Lake Association Balance Sheet Prev. Year Comparison As of May 31, 2025

	May 31, 25	May 31, 24
ASSETS.		
Current Assets		
Checking/Savings		
1006 • Checking -Stearns Bank	2,611.47	2,504.98
1060 • Certificate of Deposit	134,618.47	128,117.85
1005 • Checking-CMCU	18,658.32	7,056.79
1010 • Share Account-CMCU	35.90	35.90
1020 • Money Markey-CMCU	38,642.02	52,755.99
Total Checking/Savings	194,566.18	190,471.51
Other Current Assets		
1080 • Initiative Foundation Fund	54,368.66	50,127.32
1499 • Undeposited Funds	674.50	50.00
Total Other Current Assets	55,043.16	50,177.32
Total Current Assets	249,609.34	240,648.83
Fixed Assets		
1200 • Building & Land	35,300.00	35,300.00
Total Fixed Assets	35,300.00	35,300.00
TOTAL ASSETS	284,909.34	275,948.83
LIABILITIES & EQUITY		
Liabilities		
Long Term Liabilities		
2550 • Reserve		
2551 • Aquatic-Invasive Species	100,000.00	100,000.00
2552 • Future Buffer Strips	14,495.72	14,495.72
Total 2550 • Reserve	114,495.72	114,495.72
Total Long Term Liabilities	114,495.72	114,495.72
Total Liabilities	114,495.72	114,495.72
Equity		
3990 • Unrestricted Net Assets	162,344.94	134,031.55
Net Income	8,068.68	27,421.56
Total Equity	170,413.62	161,453.11
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	284,909.34	275,948.83



Kutter's Kolumn

Tony Niehaus enjoys a long life at Big Birch Lake

Having fun was the goal for getting together at the lake

Tony Niehaus last went water skiing on Big Birch Lake four years ago when he was 90. That event symbolizes a life lived with joy, fun and gratitude.

Tony was born in 1930. His dad, Joseph, purchased a lot on Sandy Beach in 1926 that was 50 feet wide at the waterfront and 120 feet at the back.

The lot became the families' gathering place for decades of fun, relaxation, and family reunions.

To this day little has changed at the property. In the 1930s, Joseph Niehaus, Tony's dad, purchased the lot next door owned by a man from Iowa who came a couple of times a year to fish. This piece of land contained a cabin which has been maintained in its rustic royalty.

You see, the Niehaus family was engaged in dairy farming 2 ½ miles north of Melrose. The lake place was their getaway on Sundays when they could take a break from farm work and head to the lake to relax.

Tony's first memory of heading to the lake in a Model T, was Happy Hill. It is the last hill before the T on the Sandy Beach road. Heading over the small steep rustic gravel road always gave Tony and siblings that one of a kind flutter in the stomach. With no seatbelts, those in the backseat would bounce up in the air to add to the thrill. The ride became a memorable touchstone for generations of the Niehaus family.

Operating a dairy farm left little time to spend at the lake, but as was Joseph's philosophy, they would just take time.

Tony said, "Dad always believed in looking beyond what is now." Joseph Niehaus was a forward looking man who made sure his children had college educations, knew how to give back to the community, and would get involved in township government. For over 100 years, a Niehaus has been a part of Melrose Township government.

When Tony took over the township books, his dad told him to get zoning in place in the township.

Tony took ownership of the cabin in 1949. He and his wife Carol, who have been married over 70 years, took time on summer Sundays to relax at the lake. Tony recalled having a wooden boat made by a man in Grey Eagle. They had fun with that boat in the water, turning it over and using it as a swim platform.

Carol cooked for everyone who gathered at the lake, and Pick Carlson, the next door neighbor, would come along and ask what was for dinner, waking Tony from his nap.

The Carlson cabin was to the west and the Bohlig cabin to east. All three families got along and had fun in the neighborhood even ignoring where the exact property lines were located.

Tony and Carol have six children, three girls, three boys, who all get along well which made going to the lake a cherished experience.

When it came time for Tony and Carol to send their children to college, no government money was available because they owned a second home. The children worked many jobs and they grew cucumbers to sell at the area cucumber station.

Many properties along Sandy Beach have long docks, so fishing from the dock was a great place to catch sunnies. Tony wasn't an avid fisherman but did enjoy catching sunnies.

The lakeshore has changed with bigger homes and boats, but Tony doesn't believe they have as much fun as and he and his family have had over the decades. The Niehaus property contains the original outhouse and dressing room, an early garage-like building that served as the bunkhouse, and the cabin on the second lot.

Tony is the proud owner of a classic runabout behind which he would water ski. He also performed daring feats on what was known back then as a surfboard, a plank-like structure towed behind a boat. Tony put a chair on it and rode the dangerous water vehicle. He also held the rope behind his knees while he read the newspaper.

After he and Carol retired from the farm in 1992, Tony would ride his motorcycle to the farm to help out.

A favorite memory from the farm days was threshing with the neighboring farmers. On those hot summer harvest days, at the end of the day they would head to Tony's place for a cooling dip in the lake.

To this day, the Niehaus property is the place for family and neighborhood gatherings, where competitive games are played on the expansive front lawn with trophies for winning teams.

Tony and Carol knew the importance of family, community and friends and they passed that on to succeeding generations.

Lake residents often comment about the lake being the place where memories are created. Tony and Carol would agree and know well that heaven seems closer in a house beside the water.

MEMBERSHIP AS OF JUNE 2025

Bruyere, Scott	Hoffman, Dan & Janell	McQueen, Kathy	Schmid, Ted & Julie
Bueckers, Ervin	Hotzler, Mark & Jane	Mehr, Mike & Lori	Schmidt, Thomas & Joann
Bullock, Lou & Debbie	Howe, Michael	Mehr, Ralph & Mary Ann	Schnettler, John & Jan
Bushman, Wayne	Hughes, Bob & Sally	Meyer, Barry & Denise Langer	Schnettler, Mike & Deb
Bussmann Properties LLC	Hughes, Dan & Liz	Meyer, Glenn & Dianne	Schwantes, Mike & Amy
Butte, Rick	Hughes, John & Susan	Meyer, Ken & Sherry	Schwartz, Dick & Ellen
Campbell, Mel & Sherry	Hughes, Parry & Kathy	Meyer, Virg & Joyce	Schwartz, Steve & Joann
Carpenter, Todd & Laura	Humbert, Rick & Lois	Miley, Rod & Nancy	Schwieters, Charles & Beatrice
Cavello, Butch & Amy	Humbert, Ryan & Stacy	Mische, Hans & Julie	Seitzer, Jim & Belinda
Cebuhar, Mary	Ingold, Kirk & Mandi	Moening, Lee & Judy	Sexton Family Cabin
Chirhart, Penny	Ingold, Linnea	Mohr, Marilyn	Shafer, Tom & Bonnie
Citrowske, Cheri	Iverson, Ron & Jennifer	Mohs, Dean & Sandy	Sieben, Kevin & Beth
Collins, Jim & Crystal	Jacobs, Dave & Diane	Molitor, Chick & Karen	Sieben, Russell & Mary
Collins, Joyce	Janak, Roger & Julie	Molitor, Jon	Sieloff, Justin & Sarah
Collins, Margaret	Jansen, Jeff & Teri	Mueller, Jerry	Silbernagel, John & Marie
Costello, Scott	Jepperson, Craig & Mary	Nathe, Julie	Sinclair, James & Carolyn
Costello, Kevin & Ann	Johnson, Adrian & Kay	Nathe, Mark & Ann	Sinclair, Ken & Jan
Davis, Scott & Marjo	Johnson, Craig & Debra	Neville, Steve	Smith, Patrick & Susette
DBW Family LLC	Johnson, Dan & Julie	Niehaus, Anthony & Carol	Spanier, Eric & Jana
Denne, Marv & Mary Beth	Kadri, Abdu & Janice	Niehaus, Bob & Deb	Spence, Jim & Christine
Dickhaus, Bob & Kris	Kalgren, Rick & Ann	Niehaus, Grant	Stalboerger Family, Lorraine
Dinndorf, Don & Vi	Kappes, Mike & Jannie	Niehaus, Jeanne	Starfield, Glenn
Dobesh, Jeff & Jill	Kaufman, Robert & Josephine	Niehaus, John & Mary	Steinbring, John & Sandy
Dubiel, Marvin & Pam	Kelly, Brandon & Becky	Niehaus, Mitchel & Erin	Stomberg, Chuck & Nancy
Dufner, Randy & Hallie	Kemper, Jeff & Linda	Nohner, Kevin & Mary	Strack, Bob & Laurie
Duncomb, Bruce & Vicki	Kerfeld, Cheryl	Olmscheid, Curt	Studniski, Adam & Jolene
Econ-O-Wash Laundromats	Kerfeld, Donald & Diane	Orth, David & Linda	Tanner, Lucy
Eiben, Joe	Kerfeld, Glenn	Ostendorf, Mark & Lisa	Taylor, Dennis & Trish
Elfering Cabin LLC	Klaphake, Deb	Ostrem, Justin & Amy	Tembrock, Henry
Elieff, Daniel & Julie	Klaphake, Florian & Doreen	Pakola, Howard & Barb	Thelen, Hunter
Enneking, Gene & Cheryl	Klasen, Kyle	Pavlivek, John & Kathryn	Thelen, Steve & Amy
Erdmann, Mark & Summer	Klasen, Vern & Marlene	Pelo, Rod & Phyllis	Thompson, Rod & Sally
Erickson, Russell	Klimpel, Shawn & Christine	Peterson, Dr Thomas & Virginia	Timmermann, John
Ersland, Mary Kay	Klocker, Barbara	Phillips, Rosemary	Tomsche, Dr. Ed & Theresa
Everding, Matt & Missy Kotzer	Kloos, Mike & Becky	Piersak, Thomas & Jeffrey	Trierweiler, Corey & Julie
Eveslage, Steve & Sarah	Kluempke, Cathy	Plombon, Roger & Gloria	Tschida, Amy
Falk, Jeremy & Jennifer	Koch, Bob & Connie	Poganski, Rock & Marcia	Tweedale, Craig & Mary Lou
First, Pete & Nicole	Kohorst, Don & Loni, Bob & Joan	Provinzino, Chuck & Jannine	Uphoff, Jim & Lee
Flaws, Michael & Marilyn	Konsor, Stephen & Karen	Rahn, Dave & Lisa	Van Beck, Chad & Brenda
Fox, Thomas & Laurie	Kotsmith, Randy & Karen	Ramler, Chris & Amy	VanDrehle, Donald & Helen
Freeman, Dave & Sue	Kotsmith, Sharon	Rasmussen, Steve	Vener, John
Frerichs Frank, Jane	Kuehne, Ron & Midge	Refsland, Curt & Mary	Vener, Mike & Kim
Froehling, Joseph	Kuhlmann, Mary	Richardson, David & Anna	Viere, Kevin & Ann
Fuchs, Brian & Lori	Kunkel, Phil & Rose	Rieger, Joel & Pamela	Voigt, Kenneth & Joan Zirbes-Voigt
Gagne, Bob & Christine	Kutter, Lee & Gay	Rieland, Chuck & Lucy	Volk, Randy
Gallagher, Pat & Caryn	Kutter, Robert & Nancy	Rieland, Mary	Vowles, William & Dawn
Gangl, Dale	Kutter, Wayne & Sherry	Rieland, Matt & Shari	Waldvogel, Dennis
Gasow, Ralph & Lori	Kyllo, Carole	Rieland, Roger & Pamela	Walker, Tom
Gerads, Dale & Mary Lou	Lafayette Resort	Rieland, Shirley	Walters, George & Sue
Gerding, Dewayne & Alvina	Larson, Brendan & Debi	Roe, John & Janet	Ward, Rick & Missy
Gerner, Robert & Charlene	Larson, Gayle & Karen Lemons	Rothstein, Gary & Ruth	Weber, Thomas
Giles, Henry	Larson, Maxwell & Brenda	Roy, Robert & Barbara	Wehlage, Mike & Julie
Gordon, Brian & Kristen	Lemieux, BJ & Rachel	Rudolph, Jerry & Deb	Weinman, Roger & Constance
Grossman, Jan	Lesetmoe, Orlin & Aprile Barton	Russell, Jim & Mindy	Weitzel, Michele
Grutsch, John & Jan	Lieder, William & Renee	Rutherford, Peter & Lourel	Welle, Larry & Rose
Hatton, Rene & LuAnn	Lilligren, Kirk & Cathy	Sadlowsky, Mike & Vicki	Westbrock, Bruce & Linda
Heinen, Nancy	Linn, Mike	Sand, Daniel & Mary	Wobegon Properties LLC
Helget, Ron & Becky	Loehr, Jim & Renee	Savage, William & Sharon	Worms, Steven & Shirley
Hendrickson, David & Colette	Logan, Guy & Suzanne	Schanhaar, Tom & Deb	Zaborski, Tom & Julia
Hennemann, Kitty	Mack, Murray & Sue	Schiemann, Chuck & Ellie	Zachman, Jeff & Linda
Hinman, John & Kathy	Malm, Scott & Ann	Schlangen, Brad & Angie	Zackoski, Michael & Kimberly
Hinnenkamp, Ben & Pam	Marshall, Karin	Schlough, Thomas & Joyce	Zaczkowski, Marie
Hoeschen, Larry & Elaine	McConnell, David & Ann	Schmid, Judith	Zenzen, Art & Marilyn
			Zimmer, Chris & Sarah
			Zimmerman, Lowell & Kris

SPONSORSHIP AS OF JUNE 25TH 2025



PLATINUM

Prime Source Printing	Grey Eagle
Magnifi Financial - GE	Grey Eagle
Eagle Dock & Lift LLC	Grey Eagle
Opatz Metals & Rolloffs	Holdingford
Freeport State Bank	Melrose
Warrior Boats Inc	Melrose



GOLD

Rahns Oil & Propane	Melrose
Bitz Plumbing & Heating Services LLC	Sauk Centre
Oaks Tree Service	Sauk Centre



SILVER

Atkinson Well Drilling LLC	Freeport
Kelly, Brandon & Becky	Grey Eagle
Double R Saloon Inc	Grey Eagle
Guy Waymore's Musc Emporium	Grey Eagle
Lake Country Storage LLC	Melrose
Kraemer Lumber Co Inc	Melrose
Meadowlark Country Club	Melrose
Munson Feed Co Inc	Melrose
Melrose Plumbing & Heating Services Inc	Melrose
Boomerang Outdoor Recreation Inc	Melrose
Minnesota National Bank	Sauk Centre
DK's Tree & Landscaping LLC	Swanville



BRONZE

North Risk Partners	Albany
Arnzen Construction Inc	Freeport
Hennen Floor Covering Inc	Freeport
Hennen Lumber Co Inc	Freeport
St. Rosa Lumber Inc	Freeport
Freeport Gas & Grocery-Sinclair	Freeport
Grey Eagle Electric Inc	Grey Eagle
Hinman Lawn Service	Grey Eagle
Nancy's Bait & Tackle	Grey Eagle
Update Buiding Supplies, LLC	Grey Eagle
Grey Eagle Gas & Grocery-Sinclair	Grey Eagle
Ecowater Systems of Long Prairie	Long Prairie
Dan Schmidt Printing Inc	Melrose
Engelmeyer Land Services LLC	Melrose
Mayers Inc	Melrose
Melrose 1 Stop-Sinclair	Melrose
Twin Pines Catering	Melrose

Annual BBLA ladies brunch June 7

By Jeanne Niehaus

Wonderful stories were shared by fifty-seven women members of Big Birch Lake during the Ladies Member Brunch on June 7 at Shattucks Hub. No matter if it was their first year, or eight generations on the lake, the common theme was “It’s a wonderful place to make memories with family and friends.”

A great brunch was served by the crew at the Hub. A few lucky women won organic sourdough scones and cookies offered by Hannah Gilk. To celebrate a fun morning, everyone took home promotional items from Prime Source Printing and Promotions.



Clockwise: Registration, Vicky Sadlowsky and Loranine Hoeschen; Event chair, Anne Costello with members, and group photo.



Juvenile loon chick survival declines

The latest research on loons in Minnesota reveals a stable population of adult birds. However, there is a concerning decline in juvenile loon numbers.

Monitoring efforts over the past two decades indicates there is a detectable decline in juvenile loons. Increased rainfall and runoff impacting water clarity in lakes is a potential problem for loon chick growth and survival.

Loons are sensitive to water quality, and declining clarity can make it harder for them to find food and can affect nesting success.

June Loon Count

Location	Adults	Babies
North Shore	2.	0
Rock Tavern	2	0
Sm Grass Island	4	0
Sliter’s Island	2	0
Fish Creek	1	0
Narrow’s Channel East.	1	0
Hammarsten’s Island	1	0
East Lafayette	1	1
East Paradise Beach	1	1
Chick’s Bay	2	2
Beaver Bay	2	1
Hunter’s Bay	1	1
Sandy Beach	1	1
Narrow’s Channel West	2	0
Grass Island North	2	0
Cow Point	2	2
Total Count 6/4/25	27	9
The loon count is done by volunteers Bob Gagne and Bob Gerner.		

Golfers enjoy annual outing

By Jeanne Niehaus

A record seventy-two golfers played in the 27th Annual Big Birch Lake Golf Outing on June 20th. An additional seven members joined in the fun for lunch, awards and drawing give away portion of the day's event.

The foursome of Bryant Bohlig, Ellie Bohlig, Bobbie Rissman and Caleb Rissman won first place in the morning Best Ball play. Longest Drive-Women went to Vicky Sadowsky. Longest Drive-Men went to Craig Pundsack. Closest to the Pin-Women and Men went to June and Bob Bohlig. Longest Putt-Men or Women was awarded to Lauri Burnner with a putt of 24'2".

Everyone went home with a BBLA Koozie supplied by Prime Source Printing and Promotions.

Drawing prizes were supplied by the following generous people and organizations:

Meadowlark Golf Course - 4 golf passes

Central Minnesota Insurance - All Stars gift certificates

Moening Family - TaylorMade gratis

Michael Howe - Woodcraft items

Jeanne Niehaus - BBLA Art items

A big thank you to Meadowlark Golf course team for working hard early the morning of the outing to get the greens up to speed after a storm the night before. Plan to join us for next year's event scheduled for Friday, June 19, 2026!



Becca Bohlig, Austin Bohlig,
Bob Bohlig, June Bohlig



Steve Thelen, Amy Thelen, Vicky Sadlowsky,
Barry Meyer



Calab Rissman, Bobbie Rissman,
Ellie Bohlig, Bryan Bohlig



"Chicks with Sticks" -

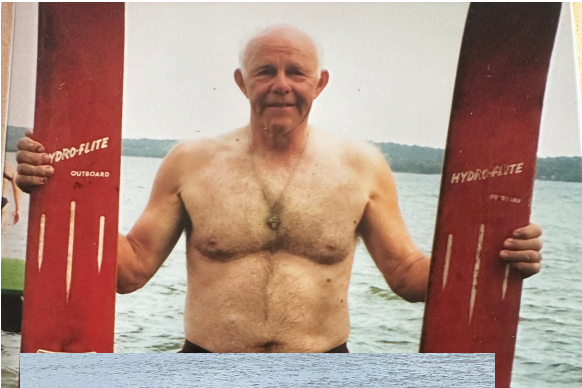
Krista Heidgerken, Suzanne Logan,
Caryn Gallagher, Lauri Brunner

Rocky Vowels, Dawn Vowels,
Lisa Pundsack, Craig
Pundsack



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Tony Niehaus
a classic legend
on Big Birch lake
(See story in
Kutter's
Kolumn)



Tony Niehaus drives a classic wooden run-about, owns a classic Big Birch cabin and was a classy water skier.