
The Lake Mitchell H.O.B.O.

Volume 14 Issue 2 www.lakemitchellhobo.homestead.com **Second Quarter 2009**

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Anita Lawson, anitalawson@bellsouth.net

The 2009 Lake Mitchell H.O.B.O. Picnic on June 6 was a great success. The weather was perfect. Over 100 people registered and got to meet their lake neighbors and eat some of the best food on the lake. H.O.B.O. furnished the Boston butts cooked by the Richville Volunteer Fire Department as a fund raiser. Your H.O.B.O. officers, directors, and area representatives are already working on the 2010 picnic under the direction of Rose Green and Johnye Woodrow. It will be improved and even better. Let your area reps know of any suggestions you might have to improve our gatherings.

The dates have been posted for Lake Mitchell's 2009 drawdown. Mark your calendars as lowering will begin on September 30, down by October 2 and the refill will begin on October 14 and full pool back by October 16. We missed the last scheduled lowering due to the drought. This is the perfect time to work on your piers and shoreline. Remember to call Alabama Power Company at 205 755-4420 to verify if you will or will not need a permit for any work you are considering.

Our fall lake clean-up is scheduled for October 29. The drawdown is only two weeks prior to that date. While the water is down would be a perfect time for us to do some preliminary cleaning. I will get more details out to your area reps prior to October. Please plan to participate.

The lake clean-up is to your benefit. I know you might not be the one that throws trash in the lake, but at the last clean up we gathered over one ton of trash and believe me, there is still trash to be picked up. We need everyone to help keep our lake beautiful and as pristine as possible. The Alabama Power Company is working hard to help us attain this goal.

Our Marine 9 Fire and Rescue Boat is back in the water and working fine following services provided by Brech Marine of Selma. The engines had to be replaced under the direction of East Chilton Volunteer Fire Department. The boat has already responded to several calls. Your H.O.B.O. association worked hard to provide this valuable service to our Lake. Your H.O.B.O. dues of

\$25.00 per year help to keep up the maintenance. Please look at the front of this newsletter beside your name and if "09" is indicated after your name and your area, your dues are paid for 2009.

The \$25.00 annually also qualifies you for the updated telephone directory. The directory is mailed to you upon receipt of your dues if you have not already received your copy. Additional phone books are available for a nominal fee.

If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your area representative. Their names and numbers are listed in this newsletter.

We need you to be involved in H.O.B.O. to keep our lake one of the best in Alabama.

Be safe.

AREA REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

Area 5 Sonny & Peggy Bullard
bullspad@bellsouth.net

What an enjoyable time we had at our Spring Fling at the Scott's home. There were 19 present with a guest singer, writer and guitarist. Some may recognize the name of Lynn DeShazo or some of her

songs such as "More Precious than Silver" and "Ancient Words". Michael W. Smith now sings the song "Ancient Words" penned by Lynn. It was a little different having some live entertainment but lots of fun. If you missed this one, mark your calendar for October 17th when we will have our fall luncheon. We'll contact you later with details.

From our pier we see many boats and personal water craft running the lake after sunset without lights. Please be aware that this is against the law and you can receive a ticket; plus it is dangerous. Advise your visitors of this law and help keep us all safe.

Area 5 was well represented at the H.O.B.O. picnic. We had great fellowship with some of the very best food ever and the largest turnout in a long time as well. Those who were at the picnic were able to see Marine 9 in operation with the new engines purchased by H.O.B.O.

Hope all of you have sent in your dues by now. Check your label on this newsletter to confirm that we've received your payment. If so there should be an M09 after your name and area number.



Hope everyone has a safe and fun summer. We are looking forward to seeing you around the lake and also at our fall luncheon.

Area 9 Dale & Patty Vann rdvann@bellsouth.net

Even though it was a bit rainy, we had a good turn out at our 5th annual Memorial Day Get Together. As usual, there was a lot of chatter and laughter. The condition of County Road 264 with its pot holes was discussed. We found out that our good neighbor, Beth Dozier, and her mother were already working on the road problem. They went to the county road department and got the road commissioner to ride with them down County Road 264 to observe first hand how bad it is. It must have been a bumpy ride because about two weeks later all the pot holes were fixed. Thanks to Beth, Mrs. Maddox, and all the people who called and went to the road department to voice their concerns.

The need for fire hydrants on County Road 264 was also discussed. Lee Bendall said he would check on the cost of the hydrants.

Some other highlights from the gathering were stories from some of the first residents on Walnut Creek, getting to know each other better, finding ways to make our area a better place to live and visit, and last but not least, just having a "good ole time".

For those that were not at our annual meeting, strong emphasis was placed on sending in your H.O.B.O. dues. If you have not done so, please consider taking care of this. The fire/rescue boat, fireworks and other donations also mean a lot. Have a safe summer.

Area 14 Rose & Eric Green Rosegreenlake14@yahoo.com

I have lots of great info for you this time. First, Coosa County has stepped it up. They now have the cellular part of the 911 system active. They are in the process of mapping and assigning house numbers to homes in the county. To participate contact Chris Dozier with Coosa 911 at 256-391-2080, or myself at

rosegreenlake14@yahoo.com. He will come to your home to log longitude and latitude coordinates of the home and assign it a house number so that when you call for assistance they will know exactly where you are and how to get there. The signs to place at the end of your driveway are \$20. This is also for those who have landline phone numbers.

For updates on the city water there is now a website, lakemitchellwater.com.

Margie Hunt has an update on the paving of Wildlife Road:

*Hello Everyone,
Coosa County has committed, in writing, to complete paving of our roads no later than October 1, 2009, barring any unforeseen "Acts of God" that might cause delays. Grading will begin soon; however, there are a couple of small paving projects ahead of ours, so we'll have to be patient over this summer.
Thanks to all of you who gave so generously.*

As for city water down Wildlife Road, it will be done after the road is paved.

It was nice to see everyone at the picnic. Thank you for all of the tasty dishes you brought!

Hope everyone has a fun and safe summer, we will see you on the water.

Area 15 Anita & Jerry Lawson anitalawson@bellsouth.net

Our 90 degree weather has arrived. This means more people and more activity on our lake. I want to remind each of you of the dangers of skiing in or out of a slough. You cannot see any approaching watercraft until they are right on you. Be careful and courteous to your fellow boaters.

Also, when in a slough your boat should be at idle speed only. If you have slowed down and the nose of your boat is up, look at the wake you are creating. The wake erodes the shoreline.

Our neighbors, Billy and Debbie Ward, have been working all winter on their new house and it is looking so good. Before long they will be sitting on their front porch in rocking chairs enjoying their view with no work to do. Of course, we all know if you own a lake house it is never finished!

Be sure and call the power company at 205 755-4420 before starting any projects to see if you need a permit.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Water Quality Report Sam Piccolo, Chairman
sampiccolo@centurytel.net

PARAMETER	ACCEPTABLE RANGE	SIX SITE AVERAGE
Dissolved O ₂	5-9	8.65
pH	6.5 - 8.2	7.44
Alkalinity	20+	41.66
Hardness	10 - 120	46.66

Quarterly Report Average Water Quality

A low **dissolved oxygen** level indicates a demand on the oxygen in the system. Pollutants such as inadequately treated sewage as well as decaying natural organic matter can cause low oxygen levels. The **ph** scale ranges from very acidic such as battery acid to very basic such as household lye. The midsection of the scale between 6.5 to 8.2 is optimal for most organisms. If a body of water has an abundance of buffering materials causing high **total alkalinity**, it is more stable and resistant to ph changes. When alkalinity is above 20mg/l there is a marked increase in nutrient utilization. **Hardness** refers primarily to the amount of calcium and magnesium, which enters the water mainly by leaching of rocks. Both minerals are essential to the development and growth of aquatic plants and animals.

Environmental Dan Murchison danmurchison@gmail.com

The Lower Coosa Clean Water Partnership promoted through Lake Mitchell H.O.B.O. the installation of monofilament line recycle containers placed at Higgins Ferry Park launch, Barrett's Camp on Hatchet Creek, Blue Creek Marina and GRACES Marina. The recycled line will be returned to Berkley Line Manufacturing to be recycled into environmentally friendly fish attracters.

There is considerable interest by several fishermen and residents on Lake Mitchell to establish a bass and crappie restocking program. Something similar to Mark's Outdoor program on Lay Lake where tournament participants are given fingerling bass to release at their favorite fishing holes during each tournament. If you would like to help with this effort, contact Dan Murchison at 755-0521 or 408-7445, or Bill Smith (Area 8) at 967-7169 or 755-6760.

We continue to have reports of erosion and silt problems from construction sites on Lake Mitchell. Excessive silt is very harmful to spawning areas and water quality. Report these problems directly to the Alabama Department of Environmental Management at 1-800-533-2336.

To report sick or deformed fish or other wild life call Emergency Game Watch, Marine Resources at 1-800-272-4263. I have tried to promote the planting of bald cypress trees in wetland areas, heads of creeks and certain sloughs. It is my opinion and that of some other environmentalists that these trees would help with slowing erosion, improve water quality, and serve as spawning areas for fish. In addition, they are very attractive and generally environmentally friendly. If you have an interest in this, contact Dan Murchison.

Scholarship Steve Miles smiles2@bellsouth.net

Congratulations Samantha Ray! Samantha, a senior at Chilton County High School, was the winner of the first *Lake Mitchell H.O.B.O. Environmental Awareness College Scholarship*. The scholarship in the amount of \$2500 was awarded in May. The scholarship was funded through donations from H.O.B.O. members and funds raised by our Lake Mitchell H.O.B.O. calendar sales. Students from Chilton and Coosa Counties are eligible to apply. Scholarship selection criteria are based on grades, ACT test scores, writing ability, participation in H.O.B.O. environmental activities and interview attributes. There were twelve applicants involved in the 2009 H.O.B.O. scholarship program. The scholarship committee would like to thank all who participated in 2008 by purchasing a calendar and thank everyone who donated to the scholarship fund. The scholarship committee hopes to continue this as an annual event and is looking forward to 2010. The committee will be planning fund raisers, including the 2010 Lake Mitchell H.O.B.O. Calendar, to supplement donations.

BULLETIN BOARD

Alabama Power Company posts drawdown dates

Dates are now set for the 2009 fall drawdowns of Jordan, Mitchell and Lay lakes. The lakes are typically drawn down temporarily every two years so property owners can perform shoreline maintenance. Drawdowns have not taken place since 2005 because of the recent drought. The fall 2009 drawdown schedule is as follows:
Jordan/Bouldin
Normal elevation 252, drawdown elevation 248/249
Start lowering 9/16/09

End lowering 9/18/09
Start refill 9/30/09
Return to normal by 10/2/09

Mitchell
Normal elevation 312, drawdown elevation 308/309
Start lowering 9/30/09
End lowering 10/2/09
Start refill 10/14/09
Return to normal by 10/16/09

Lay
Normal elevation 396, drawdown elevation 393/394
Start lowering 10/14/09
End lowering 10/16/09
Start refill 10/28/09
Return to normal by 10/30/09
Before you begin construction, make changes or additions to any structures or the shoreline, you need to contact Alabama Power Company for a permit. Changing conditions could warrant adjustments to the schedule. Any changes will be posted on Alabama Power's automated Reservoir Information System at 1-800-LAKES11 (1-800-525-3711) and <https://lakes.alabamapower.com>.
Contact information for permitting questions
The phone number at the Alabama Power Shoreline Office is (205) 755-4420. Ask for Gala Wheat.

CEDAR COVE RENTALS Judy Murchison

Oops. I inadvertently left out the ad for Cedar Cove Rentals when the new phone book was sent to the printer. Shame on me! Here is the ad for all to see and hopefully pass the word about short-term rentals on the lake, you might want to cut it out and tape it in the back of your new book. Please consider all our phone book advertisers for your needs.

CEDAR COVE RENTALS

DO YOU HAVE OVERFLOW GUESTS AND NEED A HOUSE TO RENT?

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND THAT WOULD LIKE TO SPEND A WEEK ON THE LAKE TO SEE IF THEY WANT TO BUY ON THE LAKE?

DO YOU HAVE FRIENDS/RELATIVES THAT WOULD LOVE TO TAKE A VACATION ON BEAUTIFUL LAKE MITCHELL?

IF YOU ANSWER "YES" TO ANY OF THESE QUESTIONS CEDAR COVE RENTALS CAN HELP! THEY HAVE SEVERAL WATERFRONT HOUSES AVAILABLE FOR SHORT-TERM RENTAL. ONE HAS 3 BEDROOMS 2 BATHS AND THE OTHERS HAVE 2 BEDROOMS AND 1 BATH. RENT BY THE WEEK or WEEKEND. CALL 205- 755-0863 OR VISIT THEIR WEBSITE AT <http://www.cedarcoversrentals.com>

Please note other corrections to new phone book

Corrections to 2009-2010 (green) Phone Book:

Area 1

Lee, J.B. & Doris: change email to leeonlake@netzero.net

Haley, Jim: correct home address to 704C, Destin, Florida 32541

Area 2

Callaway, Noland & Kitty: delete from book

Area 3

Henderson, Barbara: change email to

bhenderson1337@charter.net

Area 5

Buck, Gray, Jr & Dot: delete Dot & Gray Jr and add

Buck, Tom & Pam 1140 Winchester Cove, Vestavia, Al

35216, Home Phone (205) 979-1269, no Lake Phone

Burkes, Herbie & Linda: Cell Phone change to (205)361-1294

Area 7

Johnston, JoAnn: correct home phone to 978-1610

Area 9

Watley, Bobby & Carolyn: change email to

watleyc@centurytel.net

Area 10

Derryberry, Mary Charles: change email to

marychas@hughes.net

Griffith, Stan & Vickie: change email to

vgriffithnp@hotmail.com

Mims, Johnny & Jennifer: change home address to 874

Cox Drive, Clanton, Al 35045

Seagle, Linda: change email to lseagle@hughes.net

Area 12

Gallups, Wayne: Home Phone (256) 245-0032

Area 13A

Zeigler, Alan & Nancy: azeigler@zieiglerlawfirm.com

Stocking, Ann: grannyhose04@aol.com

Vinson, Toby & Jamie: jvinson@chubb.com

Area 13B

Cruse, Don & Judy: 3065 Valley Ridge Road,

Birmingham, Al 35242, Home Phone (205) 980-3259,

Lake Phone (256) 377-2604

Area 14

Pickering, Jimmy: Home Phone (803) 323-7745, Email:

j_pickme@yahoo.com

Smith, Ed & Cindy: add Lake Phone (205) 441-2225 or

441-2226

Area 15

Tossey, Gregg: email change to tossey55@att.net, Lake

Phone (334) 224-6891

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Email any submissions to beckmau@earthlink.net and judymurchison@gmail.com for editing and inclusion.

Memorial Gifts

The Lake Mitchell Memorial Fund is available for gifts in honor or in memory of a friend or loved one. Please send your contributions to our post office box and note your check accordingly. The intent is to set aside these funds until there is a sufficient amount to fund special projects.

"Good Neighbor" postings

You now have an opportunity to give and take, or sell and buy with your lake neighbors. We are offering this

The Lake Mitchell H.O.B.O.

opportunity to any current (annual dues paid) member of our organization. If you have an item to sell or give away, or are looking for an item, you may submit a written request to Becki McCallum at beckmau@earthlink.net. She will verify that you are a current member and reserve the right to edit the content. Any requests for publication need to be made by the newsletter deadline posted on the above calendar.

Found by the Bullards (they live on the main river channel): we had a high back green with a flower emblem plastic chair to float up, as well as a baby blow up floating toy seat in the shape of a frog during one of our last storms. Not very valuable but the chair may complete someone's set. Who knows if they would want it back or not? Please call Sonny and Peggy at 755-9514 if you know where they came from.

From Judy Murchison: I know of a pontoon boat for sale.

1984 Crest, 50 HP Mercury motor. The canopy could use repairs. Asking \$1500.00. Call me for contact info at 755-0521 or 408-7445.

Speaking of good neighbors...*this topic has become a concern for many residents on our Alabama lakes*

Please Be Courteous on Lake Mitchell Tommy Carpenter

Recently I read a request in our newsletter asking boaters to please be courteous with sound systems onboard some of the new boats. I did not fully understand the reason for this request until recently. I noticed two boats were parked just past Goat Island in Area 3 and were playing their "music" extremely loud. ("Rap" or "Hip Hop" I think). One boat took off pulling a skier but the other boat stayed and turned the volume up. I had been fishing in the area that morning and had planned to fish that afternoon while watching the beautiful sunset we see looking back into the creek. The music was so annoying I just gave up. Remembering the article, I approached the boat and the passengers on board seemed very friendly. We exchanged hellos and then I asked if they realized how loud the music was. I also explained that many people spend their time on the lake to enjoy its natural beauty, peace and quiet. The response I received was less than encouraging.

Legally the water patrol can do nothing unless boaters are being unsafe and honestly that was not the case. It is just a matter of courtesy. I encourage every H.O.B.O. who encounters this issue to address the participants in a nice way and let them know we would appreciate a little less volume, especially in the creeks. If you must play your sound system loud please go out on the main river where there is more space and it reverberates less. I have enjoyed Lake Mitchell for over forty years and I hate to see all of us who enjoy its beauty and tranquility overly disturbed by a few boaters with a great deal of noise.

H.O.B.O. needs a new(er) work boat!

Our current utility boat is virtually beyond repair. If anyone has an older pontoon boat they are willing to donate (tax deductible), or if you know of anyone willing to donate an older boat, please contact Anita Lawson at 205 663-7035, 256 377-4584, or anitalawson@bellsouth.net.

Are you taking pictures?

Submission for this year's photo contest began in April. We like to get photos from each season on the lake (they are ALL beautiful). Deadline for submissions is end of August. Proceeds from calendar sales fund our new *Lake Mitchell H.O.B.O. Environmental Awareness College Scholarship*.

Marine Police has accomplished much in 50 years

reprinted with permission

By David Rainer | Clanton Advertiser, Published Monday, April 6, 2009

From humble beginnings in 1959, the Alabama Marine Police Division has moved to the forefront of the nation's effort to make waterways a safer place to enjoy the wonders of Alabama's vast aquatic resources. The Marine Police Division has been honored by a Joint Resolution of the Alabama Legislature, recognizing its 50th anniversary and its commitment to safety on Alabama's waters, which encompasses 1.2 million acres of surface area.

"Fifty years is a big milestone for any agency that serves the public," said John T. Jenkins, Director of Marine Police. "During those 50 years, Alabama has been one of the leaders in water safety across the nation. We were the first, in 1978, to require an emergency cutoff (kill) switch. "We actually passed one of the most comprehensive boating safety regulations in the nation when the Legislature passed the Boaters Safety Reform Act (aka Roberson-Archer Act) in 1994. That made Alabama the first state in the nation to require an operator's license. We were the first state in the nation to make boater education mandatory in the public school system. In 2001, the act was updated to establish blood alcohol levels for boating under the influence enforcement, and it enhanced our boating regulations overall."

Marine Police currently has two pieces of legislation in the current session. One has passed and is awaiting Gov. (Bob) Riley's signature. That bill increases the property damage to \$2,000 before an accident report is required. Current law requires a report for damages of \$50 and greater. "This puts us in line with all other states and the Coast Guard," Jenkins said.

The other legislation is a boat theft bill that prohibits the falsification of the identification number or registration of a vessel or vessel trailer and provides for criminal penalties, including possession of stolen equipment. It also provides for forfeiture procedures under certain conditions. The legislation is out of committee in both

houses, awaiting votes.

With 38 years of service in Marine Police, Major Bob Huffaker has personally witnessed a great deal of the progress from the effort to increase boating safety education and enforcement.

"The number of fatalities when I started in 1971 through the 1980s up until the Boating Safety Reform Act remained consistently high," Huffaker said. "One year we had 52 boating-related fatalities. We've seen a dramatic reduction in fatalities since the Boating Safety Reform Act. The year after we implemented the vessel operator's license, we saw a 47-percent reduction in fatalities to 17. Fatalities have been running in the teens since 1998." Huffaker said he has seen the number of Marine Police personnel fluctuate over the years, from a low of 28 to the current 64, which includes officers and supervisors. Those officers must patrol all 67 counties and multiple river systems – Tennessee, Coosa, Tallapoosa, Warrior, Alabama, Tombigbee, Chattahoochee and Mobile rivers, as well as the Mobile Delta, Mobile Bay and coastal waters from Orange Beach to Grand Bay.

"The main thing I've seen is the mass reduction in fatalities on Alabama's waterways," Huffaker said. "We have a better educated and more knowledgeable boating community than we had in the earlier days. Educated boaters are safer boaters."

Lt. Erica Shipman, who is in charge of education and the boat operator licenses, thinks the portion of the Boating Safety Reform Act that required education through boating safety classes as a part of the license process as a key factor in the increase in safety on Alabama's waters. "Because of that, we have seen dramatic decreases in fatalities and even our accidents on the water," Shipman said. "Other states across the nation look to us to see what we've done to reduce our fatalities and our accident statistics. We've even had Australia and other countries call here to see what our program consists of because we have had such dramatic reductions."

In Alabama anyone who operates a boat has to have a boater (vessel) operator's license. Anyone 12 years and older must possess the license, although operators who are less than 14 years old must have someone 21 years old or older on board, who also has a vessel operator's license in possession, and is seated in a position to take immediate control of the vessel if necessary.

The vessel operator's license can be acquired after successful completion of a boating safety class offered by Marine Police, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary or the U.S. Power Squadron. Online courses are available at BoaterExam.com and Boat-Ed.com. An alternative is to take a written examination at any Department of Public Safety Driver License Office in the state. Study materials are available at those offices. Boaters born before April 28, 1954 are exempt from the examination requirements. "The class is an all-around boating course that is extremely comprehensive," Shipman said. "It covers rules of the road, safety, aids to navigation, trailering and other issues that make boating safer and more enjoyable. In Alabama, we have licensed over 666,000 boaters to date."

Jenkins said that more than 273,000 boats are registered in Alabama.

Even with the effort those numbers demand, the Marine Police Division is also wrestling with a cut in funding, which has affected every state agency.

“With the economic downturn, we have had to reevaluate where we have our people, how we patrol,” Jenkins said. “We’re trying to save money anyway possible, just like any other agency. We’re not filling some of our open positions. We’re looking for more fuel-efficient operation of our vehicles and vessels. We’re trying different patrol methods, targeting areas of higher activity. We’ve taken a little over a 10-percent cut in our spending authority for this year and next. We’re trying to work to make sure that doesn’t impact our service to the public.

“Our main role is, very simply, to make sure that our boaters are as safe as possible – to educate them and enforce the law.”

The rain that didn’t stop *reprinted with permission*

Bill Attaway | Special to the Advertiser, Published Monday, June 15, 2009

We were having a training session in Birmingham, and it was one of those heavy downpours that usually lasts for a short period then stops. Folks, it didn’t stop. It came down for hours.

As we watched the news, it seemed like it had stalled over Central Alabama—and, more especially, Lay and Mitchell lakes. I asked to be excused and rushed home to see if I could help.

When I got to Higgins Ferry, I couldn’t believe it. The water was up to the house and almost up to the parking lot! Boat houses with boats in them, boats loose, mobile homes, small buildings and all sorts of debris was passing by at a fast clip, soon to have its encounter with Mitchell Dam with all her flood gates open.

There was nothing anyone could do. They would either pass over the dam to destruction or pile up at the wall and have the water pressure crush them and then go to the bottom.

Meanwhile, there was a slight problem at headquarters: The patrol boat is trapped in the boathouse, above the door opening, as the rising water was about to crush the top of the boat against the rafters. Only one way to go!—No!—Not through the top! Kenneth Ray came by and had his chainsaw and started cutting the rafters and braces, and as we started to take her out the top, the water stopped rising and in fact started down just as fast. A freak storm had just stalled over the area. All the creeks and streams rushing in was more than these two lakes could handle even with all the floodgates that we have. Would you believe that they were to have a bass tournament next morning and did! They caught some fish, too.

In a couple of days, they had called me to report to Demopolis! I trailered my boat, scratching my head trying to figure the logic. A National Guard helicopter met me

and gave me a tour of lots of flooded water. I met with the sheriff, mayor, police, a senator and a representative. They didn’t pass up the opportunity to have the media there and spread the news that thieves were looting the flooded riverfront property. All those houses were under water! The crest was 74 feet! Oh, it was a mess, there’s no question. I would have liked to have been home so I could help people with their property.

In Demopolis, I had to launch my boat in a city street and be concerned about utility wire, debris, two giant lumber companies nearby and lumber scattered everywhere. The biggest threat as I saw it was the big, loaded barges just tied up to trees, which could easily uproot or break off. The Tombigbee, as you know, does not have the type dams as we do and therefore no flood control. We were blessed that our flood control could move our water on through with minimal damage. —Want to be back Cruisin’

– Attaway’s original “Cruisin’ the Coosa column was published in *The Clanton Advertiser* in the 1980s and 90s. He can be reached at coosacruiser@att.net.

H.O.B.O. SPOTLIGHT

Tommy Robbins remembers.....

Lake Mitchell’s First 4th of July Parade

The lake has seen many changes but one tradition has not changed. This is how I remember July 4, 1977, the one that would change the rest of Lake Mitchell July 4th celebrations forever.

The summer starts just like any other. The water is beautiful and the sky is a wonderful color of blue. All of the television stations are advertising a big boat parade in Philadelphia. “Boats will be coming from all around the world and from all across the great United States.”

Lake Mitchell had a ski club at the time that was a wonderful group of boys and girls that knew how to have fun and be safe on the water. We had a ski jump (Graham Esdale and Tommy Neely), three kites (Joe Mims, Steve Scott and Tommy Robbins), 2 hang gliding kites (Mike Smith, aka “Smitty”, and Bo Warren), a parasail (Bobbie Randall), and boys that could ski barefoot. Jimmy McCormick could barefoot on one foot and Gordon Robbins could deep water barefoot (get up from deep water without a drop ski), and a couple that even skied on boat paddles! The above talent and Sibley Reynolds, Mary Esdale, Chris, Bill and Susan Speaks, Bill Randall, Vickie McCay and others put on ski shows at Lake Mitchell and other sites. (At my age I cannot remember all the names but as the late Paul Harvey would say, “Now the rest of the story.”)

As I was saying, the news was all about a huge parade being planned in Philadelphia. Several members of the ski club were gathered around Jimmy McCormick’s and Bill Randall’s houses talking about the event. Bill Randall said, “I’ve heard all I want to hear about that parade!” He then spread the word for everyone to get a flag and to meet back at 2 o’clock. “We are having our own Correct

Craft parade.” (At that time most everyone’s ski boat was a Correct Craft.) So that was how the first Lake Mitchell parade started.

Mr. Bill Attaway was the water patrolman in 1977. We let him know what we were doing so he could watch over us. To my knowledge I have the only picture of the start of the parade. My brother, Gordon, told everyone to line up across Cargile Creek from Jimmy’s place to the middle of the creek. I was not a photographer at the time but I had a nice camera. I took pictures of the boats before they started and as they started until we got up enough speed to form the parade line. There were 15 boats in the first annual parade. Pictured are 14 boats because the “punkin” as Uncle Bob Esdale called her was taking the picture. Uncle Bob Esdale named all the Correct Crafts back then. Boy, those were the days!

The first parade was the longest parade to date. We left from in front of Jimmy’s pier into Cargile Creek, turning around at Dixie Camp. The route then took us to Blue Creek, then up river making a right turn into our slough named Hand Slough. Hand Slough wasn’t big enough for 15 boats but we wanted my parents to see the parade. Daddy said he could hear us coming for about 5 minutes before we got there. (Correct Crafts just had a different sound back then. Each was different enough that you could tell who was coming by the engine sound.) We exited and continued up river, I can’t remember if we went to Pennamotley and to the public boat ramp where we held the ski shows or not.

The biggest thing that happened and left a huge impression on me that I will never forget was when we went into Bird Creek. About half way in the creek it narrows and on the right side there was a steep hill with tracks going up and down between the house and boat stall (it is still there). During that first 4th of July parade, 1977, there was an older gentleman who saluted,

individually, every boat that passed him with an American flag. It was very emotional for me and everyone else then and now. He had such pride. The next year I could not wait to see the older gentleman salute the flags again. A few years later our gentleman, perhaps a veteran, was not there. He was missed and I still think about him every time I go into Bird Creek. I think of him as a true American. We ended at the public boat launch and all headed back to our cabins. Throughout the day as we met on the lake we talked about the success of the parade but mostly about the impact we all felt by our older American friend as he stood and saluted each flag. Mr. Attaway was pleased with the parade except the trip into Hand Slough, where we never paraded again.

A few years later the float boat parade was started by Geraldine Nelson and Herbert Shaw. They went to all the float boats they could find and put a flyer on the boats announcing that a float boat parade would take place at 10 a.m. starting at the public boat launch on the 4th of July.

A very special “thanks” to Mr. Bill Attaway for helping us grow up on beautiful Lake Mitchell. He kept us safe by teaching us and by developing a relationship with us. I’m sure he has stories to share about the ski club. I enjoy his stories he tells in The Clanton Advertiser every week.

Well, I’ve told this story to the best of my ability and I’m sorry if I left anyone out. Maybe this will encourage others to share their lake stories. I have more about Pennamotley Road, Gullage Road, and Gold Mind Road (known as county Road 1 North today). “Those were the days!”

May God continue to bless Lake Mitchell and all who love her.

Tommy Robbins

***Have a Safe and Fun
4th of July!***