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Baraboo News Republic (Baraboo, Wisconsin) · Fri, Mar 2, 1973 · Page 21

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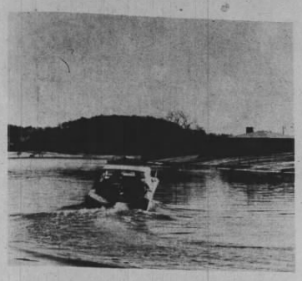


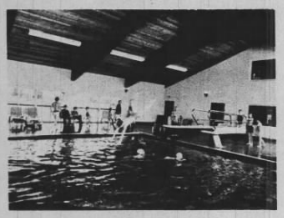
Lake Redstone provides great opportunity for year-round recreation.

N.E. 'Ike' Isaacson

The dining area which sweeps around a massive central fireplace overlooks the golfcourse at Voyager Village.

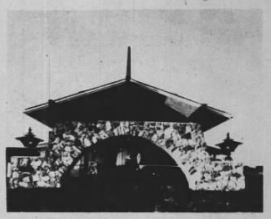
A paved airstrip brings property owners to the Voyager Village golfcourse and the clubhouse (background).

Golfcourses, such as this newly opened one at Voyager Village, are a vital part of the amenity package at Isaacson developments.



Winter or summer swimming fun is available at the Voyager Village olympic-size pool.

One of the planes in the fleet, the MU-2, is a prop-jet eight passenger.



The Voyager Village clubhouse with its striking stone and timber entrance was designed by Edmund J. Schrang of Reedsburg who is a consultant and architectural designer exclusively for the Isaacson firm.

N. E. Isaacson . . . . . "Lake Builder"

Almost any day of the year, winter or summer, there's activity around a big, blue hangar at the Reedsburg airport. The fleet of planes there is an essential part of the expanding recreational land-lake enterprises of N. E. Isaacson and Associates, Inc.

The firm's downtown offices form the nerve center of a rapidly growing industry aimed at creating second and retirement home communities near water.

How fast the business is expanding can be quickly grasped by glancing at a map in one of the offices.

Various colored pins locate past, present and future projects spread across the country. Five completed lakes are in Wisconsin, including Sauk County's Lake Redstone near LaValle.

Present developments are:

SNOWFLOWER, a skiing, camping, water-sport mecca in the Sierra Nevada mountains of central California.

SUGAR SPRINGS, a 4,000-acre second-home development in central Michigan which features two lakes totaling more than 1,000-acres of water surface.

TURTLE COVE, a 2,200 acre recreational-home community just 60 miles from Atlanta. It's located on massive Lake Jackson which is considerably larger than Lake Monona at Madison.

VOYAGER VILLAGE in northwest Wisconsin, the largest of the Isaacson projects at 6,000 acres. This one has eight natural lakes and everything from a clubhouse, indoor swimming pool and tennis courts to a riding stable, air strip and ski lodge.

Scheduled for launching this year are three additional second-home communities: One in north-central Missouri named Lake Thunderhead; another recreational facility near the Petenwell Pentenwell flowage in Adams county in central Wisconsin; and the third, Cypress Landing, in Florida not far from St. Augustine.

With these projects so geographically separated, it's obvious why the firm depends heavily on its fleet of planes.

It's equally obvious that Wisconsin has been a favorite place in the life of N. E. "Ike" Isaacson, president of the firm which bears his name.

Born near Oconomowoc, Ike Isaacson created his first lake, Upper Oconomowoc, back in 1960.

Says the 45-year-old Reedsburg resident, "It was the beginning of what has been the most fulfilling, exciting, and creative 12 years anyone could hope for. I was personally involved in administration, on-the-job construction and every other phase of lake building in those early years."

The lean, six-footer adds, "Upper Oconomowoc was small as lakes go, but it opened the door to a new world for me. Every lake since then has reflected the techniques we learned in that first one."

In the 12 years since he started creating lakes, Isaacson has put six new bodies of water on the Wisconsin map, totaling more than 2,700 acres.

This does not include the 1,600 acres of water that exist in eight natural lakes at Voyageur Village.

The firm has created more new lakes with more surface acres than any other private concern in the state's history.

What is even more important to Isaacson is the fact that each project has reflected the trend-setting qualities necessary to keep ahead of the growing demand of the public for recreational second-home and retirement living.

LAKE REDSTONE

The creation of Lake Redstone in Sauk County was perhaps the biggest milestone for Isaacson. Not only was it his first experience with a truly major project, but it was also a big event for Wisconsin.

Lake Redstone is the first major man-made body of water in the state created exclusively for recreational living.

It was also the first project undertaken entirely with private financing. When constructed, it met or exceeded all existing state regulations on man-made lakes and surrounding shoreline building.

Lake Redstone also marked the beginning of the company's public access policy with a 30-acre park, three scenic overlook areas and three public boat launching sites.

Started in 1964 and completed in 1967, the lake boasts 625 acres of water surface and nearly 18 miles of shoreline.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Surveys of the economic impact of this trend-setting project also have proved revealing. It has generally been known that the influx of tourism dollars has a profound influence on an area.

If a community can entertain just ten vacationing families per day, the yearly dollar volume in money spent by the families easily tops $100,000, according to L. G. Monthey, University Extension specialist in the travel and tourist industry.

Seasonal residents, who make up the great majority of the 1,600 property owners on Lake Redstone, spend an average of $1,500 per season in LaValle and the surrounding area.

Monthey states that those from out of state traditionally spend more, something like $2,000 per family. A little arithmetic or a visit with some of the merchants in the lake area will back up the contention that a second-home recreational project such as Lake Redstone provides a tremendous boost.

Of course, the circle spreads out considerably beyond LaValle with all communities within 25 to 40 miles sharing in the fuel, food, entertainment and construction dollars.

CORPORATION FORMED

Ike Isaacson moved to Reedsburg while Lake Redstone was under construction. In 1967 he formed N. E. Isaacson and Associates, Inc. and in 1968 moved his corporate headquarters to a building on Main Street which he promptly remodeled into a suite of offices.

The organization mushroomed from two employees in 1967 to well over 700 today. Of this total, more than three dozen work at the corporate office, all living in Reedsburg or surrounding communities.

Dozens more make regular trips to the headquarters, most of them by plane. The heavy use of aircraft by the firm led to the construction of a unique water-strip adjacent to the regular strip at the Reedsburg airport.

This water-way accomodates the firm's float plane which can conveniently bring personnel to and from lake projects with no loss of time usually associated with getting people from airports to where they want to go.

The regular blacktopped runway at the airport is long enough to accomodate the firm's prop-jet planes including a recently acquired 18-passenger Handley-Page.

But the growth of the Isaacson firm didn't happen overnight. After Lake Redstone came Lakes Sherwood and Camelot in Adams County and Legend Lake in northeast Wisconsin's Menominee County.

ADAMS COUNTY PROJECTS

Lake Sherwood reinforced the effect of such a development on the economy of an area. The township of Rome, in which the lake is located, had an assessed valuation of $1.3 million in 1967. The assessed valuation reached nearly $16-million by 1971, the latest year for which figures are available.

Isaacson explains, "Lake Camelot also marked the first demonstration in our state of an area in which none of the properties front directly on the water.

"We call it 'Total Offshore Development'. We left all of the shoreline in its natural state for a minimum of 100 feet from the water's edge."

He adds, "No development, not even a pier, is permitted on the shoreline. The Walden area, as we call it, is also protected by a powerboat restriction."

LEGEND LAKE STARTED

Legend Lake was started the same year as Lake Camelot, 1968, as a partnership between Isaacson and Menominee Enterprises, Inc., the business arm of the Menominee Indian Tribe.

Its main aim was to build the economic base of Menominee county consistent with protecting its natural resources.

Menominee county's selective recreational land development program was started by the Menominees after being advised by at least five study groups that it was the only realistic way for them to build a firm financial base.

The Menominees started developing what they called West Lake but it ran into engineering financing and marketing problems

Isaacson was among a number of nationally known developers considered as a partner by Menominee Enterprises. Isaacson was chosen and construction of Legend Lake was started in the 5,170 acre development which amounts to 2.2 percent of the total county land.

Clustering of homesites was expanded to the entire project so that 53 percent of the development remains in its natural state.

The partnership produced sudden and dramatic economic benefits for the county. Total tax assessments jumped $5.5 million from 1969 to 1970.

Menominee Enterprises, which carried most of the county tax load prior to Legend Lake, saw its share of total assessment drop from about 95 percent in 1967 to 62 percent in 1970. The economic benefits to the county were still growing when the partnership ended in July, 1972.

The Total Off-shore Development concept inaugurated at Lake Camelot was expanded to its ultimate at Voyager Village when that Burnett County project was opened in 1970.

All vacation home properties are set back 200 feet from the shoreline of the eight natural lakes with an additional 75-foot setback to the building site. This concept has won plaudits from planners and conservationists throughout the Midwest

Isaacson also started two recreation-related concerns in 1970. Four Seasons Structures, Inc., located at Phelps, Wisconsin, is a wholly-owned subsidiary.

It produces primary as well as vacation homes in modular units, trucks them to a building site and places them on the foundation. With homes already being enjoyed by families in Wisconsin and Michigan, the firm has recently expanded into the motel and condominium field.

The Isaacson organization also originated Lake Sherwood Real Estate and Building Service with headquarters in Adams County.

Formerly, investment-minded people, property owners who were moving to other states or those wishing to sell for other reasons, had to rely on the sometimes limited resources of real estate brokers in neighboring communities.

Now, the new service hanles property sales of existing owners on both Lakes Sherwood and Camelot.

FUTURE GROWTH

On the question of future growth of his firm, Isaacson replies, "Every indication points to continuing and strong demand for recreational water-oriented property. People will have more leisure time and a larger percentage of families are able to afford a second home."

He adds, "We have many owners who are in the $10,000 a year bracket. They just made up their minds that having a place near water for recreation with their children is worth investing in. It's also a place to retire for many of them.

"And of course our projects now have so many amenities that there's something for the family to do all year long."

In 1960 when Isaacson entered the land and lake planning field, he was determined to offer an alternative to the largely uncontrolled vacation and recreational sprawl that was developing across the countryside.

The acceptance of his planned recreational complexes by the public and the many commendations and awards presented to his firm for his innovative concepts have been Isaacson's greatest source of satisfaction.

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