

Guides Hall of Fame His Epitaph

The last of his breed, it might have said
The end of an era, it could have read.
His chosen profession to guide and to fish,
His camp on the shore of the Manitowish.

No Jack of All Trades, no job on the side.
He mastered his craft—Professional guide
He lived out his life at the river's bend;
Naturalist, guide, Lloyd LaPorte was a friend.

The guides were so much of the history of town,
Guests booked resorts where their guides could be found.
The mornings were hustle and bustle and guides,
Guests to the boathouse, with poles at their sides.

Guide boats were lined up for shore lunch and bait,
Fishermen anxious to get on the lake.
Men raised in the North of pioneer stock;
Their fiber was hard, like old granite rock.

They wore a six-gun and a hat with a brim,
A Mackinaw shirt on a frame that was trim.
Chippewa boots with rawhide for lace,
Nature had weathered that leathery face.

They studied the mammals, the birds and the fish,
Our first naturalists on the Manitowish.
They knew which had spawned, the when and the where,
They had witnessed the eagles mate in mid-air.

They studied the musky, his temper, his mood,
They had seen the hen decoy for her brood.
Their shore lunches were morsels for Sultans and Lords,
Their stories repeated by Chairmen of Boards.

Presidents sought them, he sat in their pew,
He broke with them bread, and drank of their brew.
They guided the famous, the rich, and the great.
The guide at the oars could fully equate.

They too sought their wisdom, their knowledge of fish
Yes, they called the shots on the Manitowish.
Sgt the hook was a shout we heard on the shore,
Let him run, give him line, careful the oar.

Undaunted by ticks, mosquitoes and flies;
Unfearing when storm clouds darkened the skies.
No job service check at the end of the line,
Got paid when they worked; to them that was fine.

No recompense for a song, aching back;
Suffered in silence when illness attacked.
A labor of love, lest we forget,
Their history dates back to Father Marquette.

Vance and LaPorte topped the names on the door,
Sullivan, Kuliek, Plunkett, and more.
Mitchel, Strandberg, Conrad and Williamson,
Waller, LaFave, Wilson and Iverson.

Haskins, Meinel, Kahn and Nelson,
Jeskovitz, Startz, Laffin and Larsen,
DeCotzau, Donit, Doriot and Devine,
Voss, Cattoi, Fitzer and Lavine.

Beall, Mehl, Felz and Poulis,
Surges, Pronath, Cain and Andrews.
Johnson, Bazzo, Brunner and Sleight,
Bart, Lange and Kolarchek, were some of the great.

Most savored good booze, some liked to raise hell,
We all yearned to hear the stories they'd tell.
The end of an era, we miss all that are gone,
To the men of this breed, might I pass this along?

When the grim reaper has called and you arrive at the gate
Before you will lie the most beautiful lake
And a boathouse that's gilded with spoon hooks & plugs,
Tapestried walls, on the deck, Persian rugs.

All guide boats are fitted with ice cubes and booze,
Soft easy chairs, when you feel like a snooze.
With Balsa wood oars and pearl handled rods,
Eletrified reels, made for the Gods.

You may drift o'er the weed beds, no rowing, no bail,
And battle big muskies that stand on their tail.
Carpets and stereo in the guides' shack,
Caviar and champagne, when you feel like a snack.

Paintings by Renoir and music by Bach,
Your wine cellar filled with good vintage stock.
When the angels have roll call and looks for each name,
They'll find all those above in the "Guides Hall of Fame".

written by Les Jacobson

