

Superintendent Marlow Hansen Rescues Man from Lake

By Clint Riese
Forest Lake Times Staff Writer

David Lawrence experienced his share of very bad luck and very good luck while fishing in Forest Lake on a weekday in early June.

The bad luck struck first. While lunging at an escaping crappie, the St. Paul man tumbled out of his canoe and into Shields Lake. Unable to pull himself back aboard, and floating in his life jacket near the middle of the lake, he could only hang on to the side of his canoe and try to doggie-paddle to the closest shore.

Though Lawrence was in a perilous situation, it could have been a lot worse, for he was spotted by a man who knows the lake as well as anyone. Marlow Hansen is a frequent fisher of Shields Lake, whose childhood home was on the back side of it.

Going about his usual duties that day as the green superintendent at Forest Hills Golf Club, Hansen happened to be on the 15th hole - which is adjacent to the small lake - and spotted the man overboard.

"I looked out on the lake because I've fished it before, so I look out there to see who's fishing and what's going on," he says. "I just noticed a canoe floating with nobody in it, and when I looked closer I could see somebody hanging on to the canoe and making their way toward shore."

Hansen yelled to offer help, but the distressed swimmer seemed confident he could make it to shore. Hansen was not so sure.

"I know there's no bottom to the lake, just muck," he says. "So I know that you can't



MARLOW HANSEN

Superintendent at Forest Hills Golf Club

stand up, so I'm thinking, 'Well, even if you get to shore, you're not out of the woods yet.'"

Again, Hansen offered help and was refused. But after watching Lawrence struggle for a few more seconds, he knew there

was no time to waste.

The 20-plus-year veteran of Forest Hills ran to the club's equipment shed, yelled for grounds keeper Trent Linden and they loaded a small duck boat used for pond maintenance onto a four-wheeler.

When they made it to the lake, Lawrence was fatigued, but still hanging onto his canoe. Armed with shovels for oars, Hansen and Linden paddled out to the scene. Lawrence was too exhausted to get in either boat, even with help.

So the Forest Hills duo used the only measure they could think of - they tied a rope around him and Linden got in the canoe and towed him toward the lake's dock, where the bottom is slightly firmer.

Upon being pulled onto the dock, Lawrence was at first too tired to stand up.

"He was done," Linden simply says.

Hansen and Linden both are certain he would have drowned if not for his life jacket. Even with it, had Lawrence gone unspotted, he very well may not have made it through the deceiving weeds and mud. Even the professional diver who retrieves golf balls from water hazards throughout the course dreads going into Shields Lake, according to Hansen.

"There used to be a dock over [where Lawrence was trying to paddle to] and literally, you'd just step off the dock and you'd come out without your shoes on," Hansen says. "Just mucky, nasty, plus snapping turtles - there are big snappers in there."

For Linden, it was not his first water rescue. The Forest Hills employee of 11 years helped save a man on the St. Croix River when in high school. Ironically, Linden had noticed Lawrence fishing earlier in the day.

"That morning, I saw him fishing and thought 'I wish I could switch places with that guy,'" he says. "Then an hour later I was pulling him out of the lake."

Not ones to seek the spotlight, Hansen and Linden were back at work within minutes of their heroics, after Lawrence assured them he was okay. The incident was witnessed, though, by a group of lady golfers, and any remaining anonymity was blown when Lawrence wrote of the incident in a letter to a St. Paul newspaper.

Lawrence "sainted" Hansen and Linden for towing him in "like a 230-pound sturgeon."

"If they hadn't been there," Lawrence wrote, "I might not be alive to feel the embarrassment...Thanks, fellas. I didn't even get your names; you left too fast."

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