

# On Wisconsin *Outdoors*

With the Dick Ellis Experts

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## A Heritage of Excellence

*Treeland Resorts brings anglers, families back*

By Dick Ellis



Boats and contestants approach Treeland Resorts to register and release fish after a morning session in the 25th annual Treeland Walleye Challenge on the Chippewa Flowage last week.



CENTER: Bob Ciszewski of Nekoosa registered this 24 inch walleye with Jane Bidwell of Treeland Resorts during the 25th annual Treeland Walleye Challenge release only tournament last week on the Chippewa Flowage. Ciszewski was fishing with Dan Paulus of Wisconsin Rapids. RIGHT: Retired Wildlife Technician Dennis Proctor of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources found good fishing during the 25th Annual Treeland Walleye Challenge catch and release tournament on the Chippewa Flowage last week



Cheryl Treland has a vivid memory as a young girl in the late 1950s vacationing at her grandfather Olaf's fishing resort on the Chippewa Flowage near Hayward. Soon to be relocated to Wisconsin from El Paso, Texas after her father's retirement as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Air Force, the self-described "suburban" family of eight children watched on a cold and rainy morning as successful anglers brought in a 42-inch musky. Call it culture shock.

"We weren't going swimming anyway because of the weather but we sure weren't going swimming after they brought that big fish in," she said. "And then they started rappin' it on the head with one of those musky clubs. I said 'Oh my God'. When we moved here, we were just a bunch of suburban kids ranging from 1st grade to just graduated high school, stuck in the woods and boonies. It was a different culture."

It would take some time before Cheryl would test the waters of the "Big Chip". But, ultimately, she would jump right in with both feet...and heart and soul... to the resort business with family roots here even before the 17,000 acre flowage was created to produce hydroelectric power in 1924.

Cheryl, with brother and business partner Harold Treland told some of their story last week during the 25th anniversary Tree-

land Walleye Challenge. The release tourney draws hundreds of anglers annually to Treeland Resorts from throughout Wisconsin and places afar to experience great fishing and pure Treland hospitality.

According to Harold, grandfather Olaf Treland immigrated from Norway with wife Esther to the Two Harbors region of northern Minnesota. A first wife, Oliva, had died as a young woman. In 1914, Olaf brought his farming



*The jaws of a musky found on an Island beach of the Chippewa Flowage 10 years ago that could have been a world record fish is on display at Treeland Resort along with the a replica of Louis Spray's famous world record musky, also caught on the flowage.*

and logging Scandinavian heritage south to the property which rests in Sawyer County on the flowage.

When Minnesota-Wisconsin Power and Light (today Xcel Energy) began planning the great reservoir to create the hydroelectricity in the early 1900s, many residents would have to be relocated from areas that would by grand design be underwater with the construction of an earthen dam. Farmers and loggers, and the Lac Courte Oreilles tribe for example, despite the objections of tribal chiefs, would be moved. On the Treland property in 1917 and 18, Power and light planners on the eve of a new age would find Olaf's homestead, cows, sawmill and planer shed and a Norwegian answer to possible relocation; "I don't think my cows will mind if they don't have to go so far for a drink of water," he said; and stayed put.

"He was a stubborn Norwegian," said Cheryl Treland who searched out the handwritten minutes of Power and Light meetings to gain an accurate historical perspective of the time. "In 1917 and 1918 they could evict people because of the flowage and the start of hydroelectricity. If you had

enough land where you could live above the water level you could possibly stay."

With successful construction of the earthen dam on the Chippewa River after an initial failure and leaking the year before, the reservoir's first full head of water was achieved in 1924, she said. The joining of nine rivers, 11 natural lakes and numerous streams became the Chippewa Flowage; Wisconsin's largest wilderness lake with more than 140 islands and third largest lake after Lake Winnebago and Lake Wisconsin. Rust colored water in the east and clear water in the west reflects the diverse water sources feeding the pool from either the creeks of tamarack swamps or natural springs.

In 1928, Chicago railroad engineer Bob Cammack purchased six acres of property from Olaf and developed a fishing camp that after significant discussion was named Treland Pines Resort. When Olaf's own first fishing business; Treland Cabins with one "e" reflecting the family name opened for business, customers sometimes came to Sawyer County confused with just which entrepreneur they had contracted with.

Cheryl and Harold's father, Oscar would be born in the farmhouse on the original property. With a college degree, Oscar would leave the family in 1941 and enter the armed service as a commissioned officer and begin a long and storied career as a WWII fighter pilot. When Oscar and mother Jonnie brought their children home to Wisconsin from El Paso, Harold was number four of the eight children and Cheryl number five.

In 1963, Oscar Treland bought out his father and began expanding with new cabins that would tally 12 dwellings within five years. The business name over the years would evolve from Treland Cabins to Cottages and finally to Treland Resorts. "With kids helping you have a built-in work-force," Cheryl said. "Our father told us that everything we took in over the first five years would be used to expand the resort."

In 1982, Harold and Cheryl became the third generation of Trelands to achieve ownership in the resort business when they bought out the Treland Pines property from the Cammack family with close friend Jane Bidwell. The partners agreed that no money would be taken out of the business for five years. "People thought we were nuts to buy it," Cheryl said. "We all worked full time jobs and put everything back into it."

In 1986, Harold and Cheryl bought out their parents and adopted the Treland name through incorporation. In 1996, Cheryl and her sister, Linda, purchased and renovated Oak Shores overlooking Chief Lake on the Flowage, which had seen 19 owners over the previous two decades. In 2002, the Treland Family purchased 300 feet of shoreline and eight acres about one mile from the original homestead and built 13 year-round vacation homes which opened in 2003 as Timber

Cove. In 2004, the Trelands purchased Pat's Landing and, Cheryl said, demolished 14 existing buildings and raised the elevation before building 21 three-bedroom, three bath cabins which opened on May 27 of 2005.

"The dump trucks would haul away the debris from the demolished cabins and come right back with sand to raise the elevation," she said.

For children who really didn't care to get their feet wet in the Chippewa Flowage, Harold and Cheryl and family are indeed swimming in it as adults who know the value of paying dues, hard work, and an uncompromising commitment to their clientele. Hundreds of returning anglers and family members enjoying the 25th Treland Walleye Challenge serve as a testimony to not only great fishing on the Big Chip, but Treland service.

"Running a resort is a lot like being a farmer," Cheryl said. "It's not a job you can walk away from and your assets are on paper. We work with people, and grew up doing it. People that came here in 1957 or 1958 still come back."

In part, just maybe that success is due to the fact that the kids were listening when Oscar Treland shared one imperative key to resort success. "You said that you wished your wife could have come when you saw the suite you were staying in here," Harold Treland told this reporter. "We've been in this a long time. Fishermen started bringing their wives and families and long ago our dad told us that the key is keeping mama happy. The fishermen can bring in boatloads of fish but if you can't keep the wife happy, they're not coming back"

At Treland Resorts, they are coming back. For information on lodging or the 2010 Treland Walleye Challenge call 715-462-3874 or connect with [www.trelandresorts.com](http://www.trelandresorts.com). *OwO*