

On Wisconsin Outdoors

With the Dick Ellis Experts

www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com

July 14, 2008

Independence Day? No Bill of Rights for new teens

By Dick Ellis



Taylor Ellis and Mackenzie Koch work Spider Lake on the Manitowish Chain for panfish over the week of the 4th of July.



Taylor Ellis takes a perch on Spider Lake during the 4th of July week in Vilas County while Mackenzie Koch waits for another bite.

I am fairly certain that God pays back all boys for their adolescent misbehaviors by blessing them with daughters and making them live through the 14 to 18 or so years as fathers. In High School, my friends and I did not mean any harm on July 4th when we snuck in Highland Memorial Park, caught 37 orange carp from the cemetery pond, and dumped them in the swimming pools at the homes of the girls from whom we were trying to gain

more attention from. This action gained no more attention from the girls. However, we did embark on a few meaningful but short-lived relationships with the girl's fathers.

We also meant no harm when we snatched every election sign we could find and along with hundreds of reflectors borrowed from the entranceways of neighborhood driveways adorned the front yards of a new batch of girls we wished to gain more at-

tention from. Again, I can tell you from a boy who was a foot shorter than every girl I was in love with in the 70s who didn't own a comb, that we gained no ground with the ladies.

That week, however, we gained more attention from our own fathers. In reminiscing those events under the Independence Day beer and band tent last week with friends now gray and bald, we discovered that virtually all fathers prior to grounding a

son for life or inflicting some other suitable punishment will almost inevitably start the conversation with the same words and action; the temples are rubbed and head shook slowly from side to side, the eyes close temporarily with some apparent headache and the words, "what the heck is wrong with you?" initiates a memorable conversation.

My personal ability to foster relationships of mutual appreciation with girls' fathers continued



Lori Ellis takes a Rocky disguised as a weed bass from Rice Creek during a family vacation in northern Wisconsin during the week of the 4th of July

right through the time I met Lori, my wife of 21 years as of July 26. Standing on the shores of Alder Lake in front of Lori's family cabin in the 1980s, I cleverly showed Mr. Henske that a bottle rocket can be hand-held, abandoning the "bottle theory" and released on a successful journey just a fraction of a second prior to ignition. Five minutes after showing my future father-in-law exactly how to safely do this, we were taking him to the hospital with about a four inch long, half-inch wide, quarter-inch deep burn across his palm.

Taylor Rae will enter her freshman year as a 14 year old this fall at the same high school her daddy attended 30 years before. It's amazing how a few negative things can hover for decades over the same educational establishment. But will anyone remember the "B" I almost got in history or the tackle I almost made against Race Park in 1976? No, they won't. Luckily for Taylor, her aunts...my sisters...also attended that school, their accomplishments nicely balancing out my... adventures.

The day before yesterday Taylor was taking a milk bottle in her daddy's arms and yesterday she was at least a foot taller than every boy in class. When 22 girls slept

at our house each of the last few years on Taylor's birthday (really), there were common denominators that might be perceived as comforting for all the fathers. Virtually all of the girls were 18 inches taller and 40 pounds heavier than boys that age, they all had braces on their teeth and all had an appointment scheduled within a week or so with the dermatologist.

Well, the braces are coming off, the skin is clearing and worst of all the scrawny little boys are literally looking down at the girls and their fathers. If there is say, 500 boys in our community in this age bracket, they are each now wearing both muscles and low voices. They're polite, nice looking according to my wife and nice enough. You can see why I can't stand any of them.

This brings us to the 4th of July. Taylor's long-time friend Mackenzie Koch joined us for several days of fishing and fun including water ski shows and fireworks in northern Wisconsin before returning to New Berlin for our hometown celebrations on the actual Holiday. What happened to those little girls who liked to hang on to their daddies hands in a crowd and maybe snuggled in tight when the loudest fireworks erupted? Well they weren't with us. In fact, apparently there is an unwritten 100 yard barrier rule that a parent shouldn't invade in public lest the daughter or son actually be seen with the

parents, unless of course the daughter needs more money and breaks the rule herself.

Lori believes that rules are lessened with age as the child shows maturity and personal responsibility until they are ready to face the world. Taylor believes Independence Day begins with high school and the Bill of Rights was written just for her. I believe that Independence Day, including dating reasonably begins at about 24 and there is no such thing as Bill of Rights for a high school daughter.

All of these new challenges make it very hard to keep an eye on a daughter in the public arena, especially when the sun is setting on another Independence Day. Did you ever try to remain inconspicuous in a trench coat and sun glasses in 90 degree weather?

Really now, neither did I. These are the times of our lives. And if I'm being paid back for adolescent behavior, well...just maybe...I wasn't that bad at all.



Mackenzie Koch and Taylor Ellis concentrate on bobbers July 3rd during a bluegill and perch assault on the Manitowish Chain .