

# On Wisconsin Outdoors

With the Dick Ellis Experts

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## Fish, Fun, Family, Friends *Kind Gary Tournament packs the basics*

By Dick Ellis



The Passow family of Minocqua, mother Beverly and father Clyde, with son Terry, fiancé Kay, and son Jeff have a good morning on Squirrel Lake during the Kind Gary Fishing Tournament sponsored by the Lakeland ATV Club. Almost 150 anglers registered with proceeds going to purchase and post ATV signs around the lake and to introduce kids to fishing. (Dick Ellis)

Megan Williams and Clyde Passow might have been a world apart on the ice of Squirrel Lake Saturday. Just two more of the hundreds of anglers spread across the ice, bouncing rods and watching tip-ups, mostly oblivious to each other's identity.

They were decades apart on the calendar. Clyde has no doubt seen his share of presidential inaugurations and more than his share of northern pike escorted out of augured holes. Megan no doubt just notched "presidential festivities number one" and most probably was holding her very first perch for the camera, if the "icky" face told the right tale.

When the sun dropped on the western Oneida County sky, Megan, in Waukesha and Clyde in Minocqua would even find "home" hundreds of miles apart on the Wisconsin map. But they were oh-so-close on the fish-fun-and-family-meter.

Clyde Passow hunkered around augured holes far to the east with wife Beverly, sons Jeff and Terry, and Terry's finance, Kay. A couple fat pike, a skillet's worth of perch and a stringer of smiles told a good morning's story. Far to the west, Megan was registering that 7-1/2 inch perch while trying adamantly to con-

vince her daddy Earl, that fish were meant for catching, not for holding and to heck with the reporter and his camera. But she was wearing that same smile the Passows wore on the distant horizon.

Kind Gary would have smiled too. When he laid out the rules for what has become a mostly word-of-mouth, annual ice fishing tournament on the Squirrel Lake hardwater west of Minocqua, they weren't very difficult to follow. Have some fun, Kind Gary said. Teach some kids to fish. And even after his passing, fun and fish remain the primary rules.

"This is the Kind Gary Ice Fishing Tournament, in his honor," said Pat Harken, Vice-President of the Lakeland ATV Club, which began coordinating the event two years ago. "It gets the kids out fishing. It's mostly a word of mouth tournament that keeps growing. This year we have 148 people registered. Twenty-three kids are fishing. We have 1st, 2nd and 3rd place prizes in adult and kid's categories for northern pike, perch, walleye, bluegill, crappie and bass."

The primary mode of transportation on the ice Saturday is ATVs, with a scattering of snowmobiles also taking participants in

to headquarters to register fish, a warming by a blazing fire, a hotdog or coffee. Proceeds from this tourney will help purchase and post the ATV signage as roads gain approval for winter ATV use. The neighborhood roads just around Squirrel Lake for example, said Harken, cost \$1100.

According to Tom Lynn, owner of WorkNsporz in Minocqua and Lakeland ATV Club member, the 148 registered anglers on the ice Saturday represented a 20 percent increase in participation from 2008. In addition to signage, funds raised support safety and education for ATV use. The Club offers registered safety instructors for classes held two or three times each year.

The Club, Lynn said, works with the Minocqua Town Board and Planning Commission to move forward with efforts like having winter roads opened for use by ATVs. He encouraged other clubs statewide to petition local governmental bodies for road access. Summer access to public roads remains unavailable to ATV use in this

northern region.

“There are no summer routes available for ATV use,” Lynn said. “The summer part is a difficult challenge. People sense that ATVs are loud and disruptive. People come up to use the lakes in the summer and they say that they’re seeking peace and quiet. But these are the same people out in their boats and jet skis.”

Lynn called public education and ATV access efforts by the Club as taking “baby steps.” This reporter told Lynn that as a deer hunter hunting public land in Vilas County that requires a long walk to reach stands where competition is unlikely, having all logging roads open to ATV use without restriction would raise concerns.

Lynn said that ATV clubs are seeking only specific routes that would be available to all terrain vehicle traffic. Any road that is not specifically designated for ATV use, he said, would not be legal to use. He said also that ATV clubs also designate trail ambassadors to police the routes that are avail-

able.

“I hunt in Florence County in the Nicolet National Forest,” Lynn said. “Anything that is bermed off is not available to ATV use. It’s bermed off and posted and that is where the ATV clubs come into play. Our trial ambassadors are out there to tell people to slow down, don’t rip up trails, be responsible and do not go on to any private property.”

Looking out over the tent and tip-up town that had sprouted over Squirrel Lake, or over lakes across Wisconsin in the hard-water season, another comment made by Lynn is unquestionably true. “ATVs and ice fishing,” he said, “go hand in hand.”

Other common denominators east and west, north and south on the ice February 7, included a whole heck of a lot of flags springing in the breeze. And a whole lot of smiles.

Exactly, in fact, what Kind Gary intended. *Wo*



**LEFT:** One of the organizers of the 'Kind Gary Fishing Tournament' February 7 produced by the Lakeland ATV Club, Tom Lynn is ready to ride another circuit of the 148 anglers working Squirrel Lake near Minocqua. **MIDDLE:** Bryant Behn of Minocqua registers this nice largemouth bass just shy of 16 inches during the Kind Gary Fishing Tournament Saturday on Squirrel Lake in Oneida County. **RIGHT:** Megan Williams likes the catch but not necessarily holding the fish as she registers her perch during the Kind Gary Fishing Tournament February 7 sponsored by the Lakeland ATV Club in part to introduce children to fishing on Squirrel Lake near Minocqua.