

UNDERWATER ADVENTURES! By Allan Holden
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Thinking about fishing tackle collectibles, reminded me of a time when I was in my mid-teens. I met a teenage boy who was about my own age on a family camping trip to northern Michigan. We both enjoyed snorkeling and together we had a week of high adventure exploring an old fishing lake! This was a great time, one that I will never forget. My parents and grandparents had rented cottages at the lake and in the rental fee was included the use of two wooden row boats. We would take turns towing each other around the lake, behind the boat near the shore.

We liked to stay in water from six to twenty feet deep. One of us would row the boat slowly while the other one held onto the rear of the boat. The one being towed was looking through a face mask and breathing through a snorkel while scanning the bottom. We also wore a good set of swim fins to propel us quickly to the bottom then back up for air. With the dive mask you could see amazingly far in the clear lake. The actual distance you could see in any lake depended on the algae level at that time of year, and simply how clear the lake was.

If you had asked us what we were looking for, well, I doubt we could have answered. We dove on anything that looked interesting. Mainly what we watched for was anything that appeared to be man made. I do recall seeing a few actual tackle boxes but they seemed rather uninteresting! We found fishing rods, bait buckets, lots of fishing stuff!

One day as we pushed off from shore it was my turn to go in first. We kept good track of whose turn it was, even from day to day. So, I put on the fins and tightened up the straps, holding my mask and snorkel in hand, I entered the water with a feet first jump. As I sank into the water and prepared to surface, I felt something rub firmly against my leg and up my side --- man did it hurt! It didn't break the skin, but later I showed several bruises. At the surface I put on the mask and snorkel, filled my lungs with air and went back down to investigate. To my horror it was a homemade ice spud stuck firmly in the muddy bottom! If I had been six inches over it would have been stuck in another bottom!

Later on that same sunny, summer day, I was in the water while it was my friends turn to row. We were out deep enough so that you could see the bottom but it was very dark and shadowed. When it gets like that, well it seems a little spooky, and frankly it's a little deep for me. As I instructed my pilot to steer a course toward shallow water, I continued to search the bottom. This lake was actually a very old reservoir created by flooding an old forest, near the turn of the century, when a power dam was built.

Even though decades have past, there was no shortage of old tree stumps littering the bottom. They all looked like giant sea monsters with their roots exposed. The roots reached across the bottom like arms reaching out. Often the stumps would be littered with fish lures, as well as tangles of fish lines that wrapped them in every direction. These net-like tangles of nylon fish line, like a giant spider web, could be a death trap to a snorkler! Sometimes, the very sight of these silt covered monsters kept you on the edge of fright. Nothing however could have prepared me for what I was about to see next on the shadowed bottom.

It's not so much what you see that startles, you as how you see it. With a dive mask like the one we had, you have no side vision. With the boat doing the moving, the images you see through your mask seem to just appear like on a television screen. In other words, you have no warning of what you will see next.

There was something about the image that was slowly materializing before my eyes that was both surprising and frightening! It was a big old boat! At least, big for that lake! It looked to be about thirty foot long. At one time it was a beautiful inboard speed boat. It looked like the early Cris Craft models that maybe you have seen with the thin stripped Mahogany decks. At one time this was a very expensive boat! It had the two cockpits and both were filled with grapefruit sized rocks!

As we discussed our find, a decision was made to claim this treasure discovery in the name of the U S, meaning we two! We hadn't removed even one stone before we invisioned ourselves cruising the lake with our shiny yacht, filled with adoring bathing beauties! Down we went, time after lung bursting time. We worked for what seemed like hours lifting and dropping rock after rock then surfacing for air. The work

was going slow, and as I think back, I cannot help but wonder what we were thinking??? Was this boat going to bob to the surface when the last stone was removed? Or was the cast iron 800 pound V8 engine going have some bearing on that?

As we surfaced together the last time, we both heard someone yelling over the sound of our gasps for breath. Looking toward shore, we saw the most frightful sight of the day! An old man with a rifle, and it was pointed our way! He gave us complete instructions on how quick to leave and he used very strong language to express his demands! I don't remember which of us was rowing as we left, but we were going almost fast enough to pull a skier!

Relating the event to our parents back at the cottage bought more disappointment. As we rowed back, we thought up a dozen conspiracies that this man was likely a part to! This included everything from insurance fraud to foreign espionage! Our parents listened with some interest, but figured this was better off forgotten. Over the years I have been left with a lot of whys?