



CLUB HISTORY



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It is with great pleasure that I welcome all of you to the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Water Ski and Wakeboard Association of Alberta. I am honored to be serving as president during this exciting time in the Association's history.

It is with great pride that I congratulate all alumni who have served on the Executive Board, Board Committees, and Staff team throughout the past fifty years. Water Ski and Wakeboard Alberta has been fortunate to have had a dynamic group of people leading the Association throughout these fifty years and for that we are grateful.

Water Ski and Wakeboard Alberta's mission is the promotion of participation and excellence in all aspects of towed water sports in Alberta. This is achieved through introduction of the sport to beginners; development of skill level in competition and officiating and providing support and encouragement to towed water sports enthusiasts and their families at local, provincial, national and international levels.

The clubs and schools delivering programming throughout the Province are the foundation of our sport. It is because of them that we are able to experience success in fulfilling our mission. The communities formed on the shores of lakes and Water Ski sites are the reason we are able to celebrate 50 years of towed water sports in Alberta. It's the people who come together, share a vision, execute on a plan and share in the highs and lows that ensure an organization such as ours is sustainable and that the sport we love will continue to be shared with generations to come.

This compilation of clubs honours the past and lays the foundation for the future. Thank you to Olli Megley for her tireless efforts in compiling the historical information into something that we can all enjoy today and for years to come. I would also like to thank and acknowledge all of the individuals who have generously volunteered their time and expertise on the 50th Anniversary Committee to ensure that this milestone year is celebrated appropriately.

Thank you for sharing in our history and being part of our future.

Peter Peebles, President
Water Ski & Wakeboard Alberta



Club History

Happy 50th Birthday, Waterski Wakeboard Alberta! At the risk of conjuring a negative reference, I will say, “We’ve come a long way, Baby!”

The journey to our present day status, for the most part, began with lake-loving water skimmers, often cabin neighbours, who watched each other do their own ski “thing” from a distance, then had the where-with-all to idle over and say, “Hi. Nice boat.” Many of us met on land near the take-off area. “How’s it going?”, “That’s a pretty nice ski. What kind is it?” or, “Are you okay??!! ” to the hot-dog guy who whipped into shore at warp three, catapulted out of his ski when he struck land, and lay on the ground, seriously beach-rashed. Bonding takes many forms...

However it happened, we realized that it was a lot of fun to hang out with folks who shared a common love of sport on water! Furthermore, if we joined forces we could access certain types of facilities and equipment (and good times) that one person just could not create or acquire easily alone. We could learn from (and show off to) one another! So on the third day, we created clubs...

Clubs became the backbone of the Alberta region, and have remained very much so for all of our 50 years.

This is a compilation of “club” (sites/groups/associations) stories - clubs that no longer exist as water ski sites (Heritage clubs) and present day clubs, “Year 50” (in alphabetical order). Many thanks to those who responded to my hounding/pleading/request for input. I have included that which you so thoughtfully provided, and, of course, that which I have come to know over the years!

Olli Megley

Writer/Editor

HERITAGE CLUBS

Bonnie Beach Water Ski Club

It could be said that Wizard Lake Club holds the Alberta record for “Most Spin-offs” meaning former members of Wizard, who went on to create their own sites. Such was the case with Bonnie Lake. In the mid 1970’s, after a few seasons at Wizard, the Stefaniuks, Lorna and Don, and Olli Megley; along with Dan Skarlicki, chose to launch their boats one hour and a half east-north-east of Edmonton on Bonnie Lake, much of which bordered the Skarlicki farm. The original club site was the Bonnie Lake campground, but when all chose to live full time in the area, a training site was set up based out of the Megley/Skarlicki home.

From the mid-70’s to the mid-80’s it was a major provincial team training centre, hosting numerous coaches and provincial team training events throughout the summer. It was not unusual to see four Nautiques parked along the ski dock, and numerous tents and trailers scattered about the yard. The bumps in the night were the cattle who grazed the area, leaving their soft plops around which to negotiate in the morning. The yips and yaps were the coyotes in this definitely rural-based site.

As well as having great success at skiing, (Dawnita Stefaniuk was named to the National Junior B team; Olli Megley still holds a provincial age-group record in tricks and was a forerunner for women in the sport in the province) founding members were well known for their volunteer work, especially in the areas of officiating and provincial administration (Skarlicki served a term as Alberta president). When several active members moved from the area in the mid-80’s, the club disbanded.

Chestermere Water Ski Club

What's green and stringy and hangs out in the water? (Obscene answers can now be shared..) But the family-friendly answer is...The Weed Monster of Chestermere Lake! No other Alberta club to date lays claim to such an infamous mascot.

What fun the Weed Monster days were! Chestermere Club near Calgary was "the" tournament spot in Alberta for awhile, weeds and bald prairie winds and speed boats and all. The Kunkels were the club's anchor, and they brought a very special spirit to the Region at the time. Lloyd Kunkel had a band (still does!) and he led waterskiers in song on many starry and fire-lit night. One provincials which corresponded with the Stampede, the band was playing at the Palliser Hotel, and waterskiers had special admission. We danced and sang until the wee hours, got up the next morning, and skied up a storm! The history of the Alberta team serenading the rest of the country with "On the Cover of the Ski Nautique" is strung in Lloyd Kunkel's (and Steve Gosse's) guitar!

There is a photo in the video history of a boat spewing inky smoke and hellish flames: that's a Chestermere story of a speedboater, who like a mosquito, who would not go away, and kept making annoying waves in our tournament area. Then... his boat exploded! ...and burned... to cinders...while we watched... and were truly sorry...sort of...the Lord works in mysterious ways.

What about the story of Chestermere Club hosting some sort of international tournament in late August? early September? Whatever the exact time was, it was far too early for snow! But it did, and it was a sad sight to see all the big time warm country skiers shivering violently on the dock. But we had brought our downhill ski wear, as Alberta skiers do to tournaments (Hey, you get all season wear out of expensive garb!), so we were just fine.

Times change. People move on. Chestermere Club three event water skiing rode into the sunset. These days pictures reveal an enthusiastic wake boarding crew in front of the clubhouse. The great thing about water sports is there is always something new and fun to do.



Innisfail Water Ski Club

by Chris Llewellyn

Don, Chris, Kreg and Jaret Llewellyn began skiing on Dodd's Lake, on the north edge of Innisfail in the late 1970's. After meeting Bruce Dodd (no relation to the name of the lake) at a tournament in Sylvan Lake, we invited him to ski with us. We also met the Kunkel family who invited us to the Chestermere fun tournament. Kreg and Jaret loved the people and the fun around the camp fire. We were hooked.

Bruce had travelled to Florida to ski with the best skiers from around the world so we followed him there and then for many years after.

In 1981 the Innisfail Water Ski Club became affiliated with Water Ski Alberta and we held our first tournament. In 1982 we hosted our first Provincials and followed that with eight more. In 1982 we hired the first international coach, Mike Ferraro, to coach in Alberta. The Town of Innisfail gave us their full support as we cleaned up the site, made a park and built the boat launch.

With the help of the Alberta Water Ski Region Don built a three level observation/judges' tower to better host tournaments, and made a commitment to the region to host the next five provincials. We then hosted the Western Canadian Championships in 1983. Two days before the start of the Westerns a huge wind came up and lifted the jump ramp straight UP AND OVER onto the water. It was flattened. Don and Bruce towed it to shore and had to get a huge crane in to lift it back up and over, and then repair it before the tournament started!

As the park area was full of people for the Westerns, Don engaged the Boy Scouts from town to clear the trees on the West hillside which made a new expanded viewing and park area. Through the Town of Innisfail and the Provincial Government we received a grant to construct the boardwalk that runs along the lake to the slalom dock and further funding for it's upkeep for ten years. Don also saw that the nearby campgrounds that many skiers stayed at was lacking a nice washroom and shower facility. He made a proposal to the Town and then built a new building with washrooms and showers. He also added electrical hookups for campers.

In 1985 Innisfail hosted the National Championships. We had total co-operation from the Town of Innisfail, the Chamber of Commerce, the Lions Club and The Royal Canadian Legion. *(Editor's note: For lack of a better word, these Nationals were a blast. They were a cut above the rest! The "goodie bag/tournament kit" featured the most unique items including the very latest in funky sunglasses - and a container of fresh water shrimp. The banquet dance boasted a giant projector screen so we could watch, and dance - to Michael Jackson...skiers talked about the Innisfail Nats, how much fun they were, for years after! For many years, Innisfail Club was akin to a Camelot!)*



Club History

Don and Bruce skied together for more than twenty years on Dodd's Lake. In the late 1990's Bruce decided to build a lake on his own farm, east of Olds. Bruce's son, Ryan, was taking an interest in skiing so it made sense to be closer to home for him to train. Soon they moved the jump from Innisfail to Dodd's Pond and a new site was established. Don then made a daily trek to Dodd's Pond to drive the boat for Bruce.

Founding members Don, Kreg, Jaret and Bruce have all won medals at many Canadian Nationals. Kreg and Jaret have set Canadian records in every age division they skied in. Kreg was a member of the Canadian National Elite Team for 20 years. His fondest wins are his three World Team Titles. Kreg is two time World Overall Silver Medalist, a World Overall Bronze Medalist, a World Slalom Bronze Medalist, a World Trick Bronze Medalist and a World Jump Bronze Medalist. Kreg is a U.S. Masters Trick Champion, a two time U.S. Open Overall and Trick Champion, a Moomba Masters Overall and Trick Champion. He has won 19 Pan Am Medals.

Jaret has competed on the Canadian Elite Team for 30 years. Career Highlights; 11 World Records, 9 World Titles, 117 Professional Wins, 9 Time U.S. Masters Champion, 10 Time U.S. Open Champion, 24 Time Moomba Masters Champion, 22 Time Pan American Champion, 8 Gold & 2 Silver Pan American Games Medals, World Ski Fly Record 299 feet, Canadian Flag Bearer at 2003 Pan American Games, Guinness Book World Record Holder.

(Editor's Note: Words cannot do justice to quantifying the remarkable contribution to waterskiing made by Don and Chris Llewellyn and family. Their tireless efforts at organizing, constructing, officiating, administering, skiing! place them in a very special place in Alberta's water ski history. The untimely passing of Don was a huge blow to his family, the province, the international water ski scene, and to...friendships.)

On Golden Pond

No doubt Brian Walker's neighbours were used to him constructing weird and wonderful contraptions, but the day in the spring of 1983 when he rolled a partly-constructed waterski jump out of his garage and on to his driveway, he really spun their heads in circles! "What's that?!" Trojan horse? Ark? Ice cream stand? Garden shack? He had a lot of explaining to do!

Back it up to the fall of '81. The Walker family strikes a deal with the Olsen family, acquiring access to a beaver pond on private land near Adrossan, just east of Edmonton. On Golden Pond Water Ski Club is born. In the spring of 1982 the Ski Nautique is launched, and the endless task of harrowing weeds begins. In summer of 1983 the ski jump makes its way down the highway to be plunked in the pond. The slalom course is installed - sort of. The cable course is not working because weeds would float it to surface, so a staked course is installed. It's a great place to ski, but...the biggest dream comes true in 1990 when land comes available, and the Walkers build their home on the shores of OGP.



Club History

From there the club expanded beyond family to members - Steve Koper, Kevin Wiens, Jim Knox, Olli Megley, Mathew Walker and the Pallas family. A large skid trailer was purchased and fitted to be a club house, accommodating many years of Alberta Sport Outreach Camps and Alberta team training camps; even training camps for Junior Worlds with skiers from countries such as South Africa, Britain, Chile, and Colombia. OGP hosted a number of acclaimed coaches including Mike Ferraro and Paul Crawford from USA, Murray Pigdon from Australia, and Scott Penry (Canada). Over the years, OGP members increased their skiing abilities and officiating to the National status.

In 2000 Nikki (Walker) and her husband, Tom Pallas, bought the family house on the pond, where they continued to ski, and raise their own family. But 2002 saw a sad turnaround when Alberta went into a drought and the water level in the pond dropped rendering it impossible to ski. Most members gravitated to other athletic ventures...

The Pallas Family still live on site, and in the words of Brian Walker "We are all hoping that one year the climate and that guy up above will turn things around and we can get those good years back and be on the water at OGP."



Pigeon Lake Water Ski Association

by Noreen Karch

The founding members of the club were Marcel and Margaret Juchli - Edmonton/ Pigeon Lake; Allan and Gail Jackson - Wetaskiwin; and George & Noreen Karch - Edmonton/Calgary Pigeon Lake. We all met out at Pigeon Lake, and spent many beautiful evenings together. Friends from then on. The club was intended to be family based, and the members organized the needed facilities.

The Karch cottage on Argentia Beach served as the PLWSA club site, although sometimes we skied along Silver Beach, depending on the wind.

The slalom course, placed right out front of #90 Argentia Beach, was perfect for quick runs from our cottage dock. It was installed through the ice in winter. It was surveyed in with George Karch's expertise and never deviated from meeting regulations. The jump was designed by Al Jackson and installed by members at #90. It also included a watering system!

The most significant event sponsored by PLWSA was the demonstration of water skiing by our guest, George Athens, national champion and world ranked skier who presented a wonderful show. It was of great interest to the general public.

George helped several skiers, especially with skiing the slalom course. The jump was too technical for most people and needed advanced skills (safety a factor). The boats used were smaller outboard motors, but also two inboard ski hulls. Allan Jackson literally MADE the ski boats! A few more words about Jackson whose life work was industrial partsman - he had such amazing engineering skills. He built the full scale replica of the AvroAero airplane that was used in the movie "The AvroAero" featuring Dan Akroid. (The Canadian government never let that plane get off the ground, even not allowing its plans be seen!) It was a marvellous airplane and Allan proved to be able to get plans and build it at home in Wetaskiwin! And he was very involved in getting it on permanent display in the Wetaskiwin Museum.

Some of the members of the club did compete at a few tournaments at which they won medals/trophies. George Karch competed at all 3 events in Alberta and at the National tournament where he was Alberta Champion. Mostly though, the Club members remained pleasure skiers. Note: The Knauts (Sylvan Lake) and the Ofrims (Pigeon lake) were amazing supporters of our club.

I managed to offer my help in the judging area and tournament organizing, travelling to clubs in Alberta, Manitoba, Toronto and Halifax to judge. It was an excellent challenge that I loved. I worked with Bob Carwell for many years who I might add, was the hardest worker Alberta ever had at the time. He did so much for Alberta.



Club History

The Pigeon Lake Water Ski Club is not functioning any longer, probably since families grew up and their lives changed. The old club starters gave up slaloming. Now they are boaters and sailors, as well as golfers.

We are proud to have been part of Alberta Water Ski scene in those precious years. And pleased to participate in this 50th Heritage project.

(Editor's note: Noreen served as Alberta president in 1970 - 71).



Peace River Water Ski Club

The names Lavoie and Savard will come up with reference to Peace River Water Ski club which was an active part of the region in the 1980's. The club hosted a particularly memorable ratings tournament in the early 80's, and a wagon train of Alberta skiers, recognizing the continuous effort that Peace River folks made in travelling so far south so often, decided it was only right to make the trek north. A most interesting machine, a one-of-a-kind, club member invented and constructed, water weed swather - brought chuckles and amazement to all who attended. Such warm hospitality.

One of the original club members, Marc Savard, has gained notoriety in the world of entertainment as a comedy hypnotist. But skiers knew long ago that he had great potential. In 1994 he did shows at several water ski tournament banquets, and anyone who attended will tell you how absolutely hilarious the antics of the participants were. He was able to draw skiers into their own worlds of fantasy, which in turn provided gut-splitting laughter to the audience. Made for great stories for a long while after!



Sandy Lake Water Ski Club

This small private site near Onoway boasted a slalom course and a jump, (and an excellent hot tub!). The name Harrop is synonymous with the club. Dallas Harrop, a Canadian national ranked skier, was part of a championship team at the US college where she attended. Rose (Dufty) served the Region as president from 1996 - 99. Both were very much involved in officiating as well.

Whitecourt Shoreline Lake Waterski Club

Waterskiers share an unusual habit: we eyeball bodies of water, and then size them up, often in seconds. Yup, it could fit a course - or not! Wonder if it has access! And this has nothing to do with actually needing said body! Then there are those of our group who are seriously looking, who do spot a potential site, and actually act on their vision. One of those families was the McGregors from Whitecourt.

They found the (almost) perfect place! Right from first eyeball they knew it was the right size for a water ski facility. It was only six miles from their home town of Whitecourt, so, close to town amenities, and it would be possible to live right on the lake. Bingo!

Plans began in 1985. Of course, the lake was weedy, and the beavers had dammed it. No problem. Drag the lake, blast out each end to block the beavers. But the mad geese, on the far end of the lake - problem. They actually chased and attacked! They required ongoing battle strategies! As with most clubs, they had their allotment of jump disasters, but eventually the site was ready. Barry and the kids, Grant and Carmen, were on the water; Maxine was the support system off the water.

For a number of years the site hosted schools and rating tournaments. Carmen (Long) achieved national ranking: she won the Juvenile girls division in 1987. Family members became familiar and hard-working volunteers at all major sites around Alberta at the time.

CLUBS AND SITES IN YEAR 50

Dodd's Pond

Ryan Dodd remembers he was about 10 years-old when his father asked him if he wanted to waterski.

An enthusiastic "Yes Dad!" was his reply, recalls Ryan.

But coming from a prairie farm town of Olds, there weren't a lot of options for Ryan to ski in nearby lakes. So Ryan's dad took matters into his own hands.

"My dad took the tractor one winter and constructed a dam in our cow pasture. My dad always wanted to build a lake. One winter, he just got after it. In the spring, we had a ski lake," wrote Ryan. "From that point on, farming was not the priority for me that's for sure!"

CBC News Online Jun 26, 2015

And that's the story in a nutshell! Dodds Pond Ski Club has its roots in Innisfail on Dodds Lake, the home site of the Llewellyn family. The story goes that the Llewellyns and Bruce Dodd met at tournament at Sylvan Lake in the late 70's; they invited him to ski with them; and the legend of many chapters began!

For years Bruce skied in Innisfail, but as time progressed and the Llewellyn boys migrated to Florida to pursue their careers, it seemed to make sense to have a lake closer to home. You know the rest. Tractor plus enormous amounts of dirt equals dam equals lake. (It was weird to see the tops of trees in the water in the early years...!) The lake was built on the Dodd farm 1993, and in 1994 the Innisfail jump was moved there.

It was just the Dodd family on the private site: Bruce, and the kids, Ryan and Lindsay. Don Llewellyn came down often to help out and drive.

It wasn't long before the site was capable of hosting tournaments, record-capable tournaments. One sad story - in 2002, disaster struck during the Westerns. Dodds Pond was too near the tornado that struck Pine Lake, so Sunday afternoon events were cancelled. Since then, the sun has shone favourably on the lake during numerous tournament events.

As is common with many talented Alberta skiers, Ryan moved to USA to university. But Bruce, and for awhile, Lindsay, continued to ski. Bruce continues to ski competitively at a high level: he was 55+ World slalom champ 2012! And, of course Ryan. We all know the about his amazing jump career. Named Junior Athlete of the Year by Water Ski and Wakeboard Canada in 1999, 2000 and 2001, he went on to be the Male Athlete of the Year in 2002, 2010, 2013 and 2014. He attended the University of Louisiana at Monroe on a full scholarship where he was captain of the water ski team that won three national titles leading the way with three individual titles. He was 2016 World jump champion. Most recently he took Gold in Open Men Night Jump at the Moombas, and in the semi-finals of the Open Men Jump, Ryan soared to a site record with a jump of 70.8m (232ft)

His wife, Breanne, is 7th on world slalom elite list. They return often enough to make their awesome presence known at the Pond.

Dodds Pond hosts several kids camps, and there is every reason to believe it will remain on the water ski scene for years to come, in one way or another. In fact, the Provincials will be at the Pond in Alberta's golden year, 2017.



Club History



Pine Lake

It's a bird! It's a plane! It's a...it's a...hydrofoil! Sure enough, the current gang, seasonal campers then and now, met feet-on-ground, in the Pine Lake RV park. Founding members included Darcy Notland, Curt Notland, Rob Schneider, Justin Shantz, Luke Smith, and Mike Still.

The club first started organizing hydrofoil clinics in 2008, and then progressed to annually hosting (starting in 2011) one of the largest hydrofoil get togethers (aka Fly-in) in Canada/United States. The annual PINE LAKE HYDROFOLOOSA has gained international status, attracting riders from as far away Australia.

But did you know that the Pine Lake riders appeared on the RICK MERCER SHOW in the fall of 2013?! That alone gives them boss/ groovy/ far out/ cool/ sick status! (Had to cover 50 years of the word!) Scariest moment (2013): one of the club members broke his back while riding. Best moment: full recovery.

Pine Lake Riders Hydrofoil Club is well respected in the hydrofoil community! The club boasts a number of riders that are in the upper echelon of "Who's who" in the sport. Two riders in our club have landed tricks no other Canadian Rider has accomplished (BNC - Ball n' Chain Mobe .. black flip with 360 spin). One of the members, Darcy Notland won the USHA Ambassador of the Year Award in 2014.

These days club riders are still spreading the word about hydrofoiling, always willing to take out a new person to try it, and continuing to host the Annual Pine Lake Hydrofoloosa.

Psst...wanna get high? Try hydrofoiling! And THE place to do it is Pine Lake.



Predator Bay Water Ski Club

Calgary Water Ski Lake Making a Splash (Abridged)

<http://calgaryherald.com/health/diet-fitness/calgary-water-ski-lake-making-a-splash>

original by DANYAEL HALPRIN August 1, 2015

Just 10 kilometres south of the city are the two parallel man-made, private lakes where they ski but the lakes are secluded and thus a well-kept secret. They sit at the base of a ridge next to the Bow River. In addition to the land on the ridge along the Bow River Valley, at the bottom of the valley is basically marshland. An underground spring of water flowed through the land making it wet, rendering it useless for farming and dreaming of a different fate for itself. Through a unique relationship with the landowners, the private and non-profit Predator Bay Water Ski Club has exclusive access to this site.

The history of PBWSC began in the early 1990s when a group of Calgary waterskiing enthusiasts once waterskied in a small bay in Ghost Lake, 18 kilometres west of Cochrane. They named the bay and their club Predator Bay because of a hidden rock shelf in the water at the end of the lake. Boats that didn't know its whereabouts got banged up pretty good.

"The first time we set up a slalom course there, we hit it and so we joked that it was the bay that bites," says Dan Velcic, one of the original members of the group and longtime former president of PBWSC.

It was on one of these outings in 1994 when the skiers were approached by the PB landowner. "If I were to dig a lake for waterskiing," he asked, "would you form a water ski club there?" Yes!

The first lake, dug in 1996, and the skiers came attracted members from Rockyview Water Ski Club. The second lake was completed in 2006. It's a picturesque setting created with ideal conditions for waterskiing. The towering spruce trees surrounding the lake in the valley protect it from the wind making for calm waters. The rock shores were engineered in such a way that when a wave comes in, it breaks and dissipates in the spaces between the rocks thus eliminating any backwash.

Today, PBWSC has approximately 75 members and has become one of Alberta's and Canada's premier tournament sites. From 2005-06, club member, Suzanne Velcic, worked on the committee with Water Ski and Wakeboard Canada that established Rip 'n Ride, a standardized national water sports skill development program for entry-level youth much like what the Nancy Greene program is to downhill skiing.



Club History

The club has hosted some of the best coaches and athletes in the world including Calgary's Stephen Neveu, World and National Champion in slalom. "They were incredibly supportive, always asking me about my waterskiing plans, how school was going and there was always someone willing to drive me through the course when I wanted to ski after school," says Neveu, who has skied in many parts of the United States as a member of Arizona State University's waterski team. He praises the esthetics of the Calgary lake, especially compared to the uninteresting scenery around the man-made lakes that are in swamps in the U.S.

Dan and Suzanne Velcic were very involved in bringing the World Water Ski Championships to Calgary in 2009. The Worlds brought hundreds of athletes and thousands of fans that witnessed this phenomenal event. In 2012, 2013 and 2014 the club held the MasterCraft Pro Water Ski Shootout, a phenomenal event that attracted the world's top skiers in the sport's three main events of slalom, jump and trick jump. The 2014 Pro Shootout was a memorial tribute to Don Llewellyn, one of the founding fathers of waterskiing in Alberta.

The majority of PBWSC's waterskiers are recreational and ski in Calgary during the summer and cross-train in the winter. Due to the short and thus cherished waterskiing season here — May 1 to mid-September — those club members of world-class stature have relocated to warmer climes in the U.S. to stay competitive. Alberta water-skiers will recognize such names Aliya McTavish, and Geneva Roach who says, "I don't know if Canadians are just so hardcore and tough but there's something about the athletes from Calgary that's shocking the U.S. waterskiers."

Accolades and championships aside, the heart of the story is that there is thriving, tight-knit community of waterskiers who have a love for the sport and this lake. Their time on the water is dear, a chance to weave through the course, sun on their face, spray at their side under a big blue Alberta sky. "Twenty years ago we were just excited to have a place to ski and never any of us ever see it becoming one of the nicest places to ski in the world," says Dan

Rockyview Ski Center

Rockyview Water Ski Centre, named aptly for its view of the mountains is a private, non-profit water ski club located on a private lake just three minutes from the NE Calgary city limits.

Originally located on Chestermere Lake, members seeking calmer waters in a more controlled environment, moved to Rockyview, a watershed of Chestermere. This occurred in the mid-late 80's. Earliest members included Ken Tegtmeyer, Greg Lapp, Barry Kaiser, Brent Jensen, Mark Wentworth, and Russ Dickson. As well as being skiers, all became highly qualified officials, Dickson was twice awarded the title of Canadian Official of the year.



Club History

The member of extraordinary notoriety was Canadian Hall of Famer, Kim Reid, former national team member, former Canadian president, former Alberta president. His wife, Brenda was also a nationally-ranked complete skier.

In 1991, seven club members bought the land which the club used to access the site, and from which to operate the club. It was a modest set-up, but it offered invaluable practice time close to home for the skiers involved.

Editor's Note: I remember joining in on a training session one year - a rainy year when the club was first established. The traffic going in on the road, a stubble trail through a farm field, was heavier than usual, which made for deep tracks, then deeper ruts, battle trenches, and by traffic's end going in, mother of all mud holes - on a curve. One of the participants, a teenage girl, became stuck on her way in, and was afraid to drive her car out. Her fears mounted as vehicle after vehicle became bogged down during its departure, and in one case had to be pushed.

But I grew up on a farm and a mud road was my first freeway. Plus I had a higher chassis than her little beetlemobile. I directed her to wait. I pounded my way through that hole in record time, delighting in the muck flying and the wild veering. Got out. Parked. Walked back to her car. I motioned for her to get in the passenger's seat.

Her face revealed her lack of confidence. Buckle up, kid. I hit that hole with as much speed as one could gain from a soggy lead up. We burst through the straightway, water, and mud shooting stars going off in every direction. We bogged down a bit in the turn, but I geared down and we churned our way around and up the incline...straining to higher ground. You could still hear the thump, thump of the mud as it whacked against the tire wall, and I wasn't sure I was going to be able to open the caked car door, but we were on the other side.

If I had been a smoker, I would have lit up a cigarette!

Currently Rockyview Waterski Centre is gearing up for the new season. The club is open to members of all ages and skill levels. Memberships are capped at 25 members per season. However, guests are welcome. Their website invites people to "come out and check out the club".



Shalom Park

The Beaumont News 2011: Build it and they will come.

Ken Nelson's world-class water ski facility has helped earn him a place in the Water Ski and Wakeboard Canada (WSWC) Hall of Fame, and it's not hard to see why he's being inducted as a "pioneer" of the sport...

"In a lot of ways, it's like the movie Field of Dreams. I saw a man-made lake in California in 1972 and I realized, as a competitive water skier, that water skiing could use facilities... just like hockey has facilities. So that planted the seed," said Nelson, on why he decided to build Shalom Park, which opened just in time for the 1986 National Barefoot Championships. "I spent 13 years looking for the (ideal) place to build the lake."

In Shalom Park's 25-year history, thousands of water sports athletes have descended on the lake to compete in events, including three international, at least 13 national, and 14 provincial championships. The venue has also played host to more than 100 local competitions. Earlier this year, Nelson opened up the facility to members of the Canadian military during the first annual Honour Day. Members from Namao base were invited to use the water ski facilities for the day, while various other activities including a barbeque, climbing wall and face painting were put on as an appreciation for their service to the country...

Nelson will be inducted into the Hall of Fame alongside four other Canadians during the WSWC Annual Congress, which will take place in Calgary in November.

Shalom Park History by Ken Nelson

Some of the first skiers that helped me establish our "club" were Al Brebner, Tim Healy, Trevor Pihrag, guys I knew who were interested in skiing. Others that followed shortly include Dwayne and Brenda Shandro, Jim Hole, Ross Kneteman, , Dan Skarlicki, Ron and Jo-Anne Moore and family, Julie Hendrix, Steve Gosse, Olli Megley, Matt Gosse and Chris Gosse, Shelia and Cheryl Hansen, Chad Dean, Lloyd Sawatsky, Don Galenzoski and kids...

I had been involved with a few clubs prior to this. The first one was Wizard Lake WSC, and then for a year or two I formed a club at Halfmoon Lake east of Sherwood Park followed by Whitewood Lake near Wabamum.



Club History

When we moved back to Edmonton, I soon found the property where Shalom Park was built. That was the spring of 1985. By spring of 1986, the lake had been excavated and we started skiing about June 25th. There was only 3 feet of water in the pond as I was still pumping from the river, but I couldn't wait any longer. The tears streamed down my face as I realized a 14 year dream had come true.

In 1987 I built our home and a year later, I started a many year project to build the Tournament Center. It wasn't really completed until 2000 but functioned well for its primary purpose - control center.

The first tournament was the Barefoot Nationals in 1986. The lake flooded from the river two weeks before the event but Lorne Weber continued to train anyway. He got sick from the ecoli bacteria. Our first National Water Ski Championships was in 1989 and, of course, I thought it was a great success. Since then we have held so many including National Wakeboard Championships that I cannot remember them!

1996 was a very exciting year with the Junior World WSC with 22 countries represented. We also hosted three quasi "Pro" events that were organized by Ave Spratt or myself. Andy Mapple loved skiing here.

In 2015, we started hosting the Canadian Open as a combined Pro and semi Pro event. It was small in budget the first year with a payout of just over \$20,000 but our prize money included small prizes for the kids, a new concept that brought a lot of interest and enthusiasm. 2016 raised the budget to over \$80,000 with a payout in prize money of over \$50,000. This year we are paying out over \$60,000 and bringing Women's Slalom prize money much closer to the Men's prize money. We are also paying Overall prize money for the kids divisions. The budget is over \$100,000!

In 2012 we created the Chuck Moore Memorial in honour of Thomas Moore's grandfather. Jo-Anne is very involved in putting it together and it is a great RC event. Without Jo-Anne's help, we couldn't host either this event or the Open. Her commitment is exemplary.

One of our most successful programs has been New Kids on the Water. We have hosted this event every year since 1988 and have used it to teach over 2000 kids to ski. In 2011 we initiated Honour Day. We invite the Military from Namao to join us for a day of skiing and a barbecue. They have a great time and appreciate our way of showing them how much we appreciate them.

Without a doubt, Thomas Moore has achieved the greatest status of any club member. He is still today an excellent skier but doesn't ski with the same dedication - family changes things. Another notable event was Ryan Dodd learning to jump at Shalom Park. Mike Ferraro was here coaching us and Bruce dropped Ryan off for instruction. He didn't really expect Ryan to go over the ramp but that planted the seed of passion for Ryan. He mentions it often. Many others have gone on to achieve National success - Shalom Park has always been an exceptional training site.



Club History

Another exceptional skier that has trained at Shalom Park for the past many years is our Provincial President, Peter Peebles. He has progressed to become a very strong competitor in all the disciplines. However, the most exciting for me has been to see my family, Chuck, Kristy, Sean and Evan find such a strong desire to ski. They have all done exceptionally well at both a National and International level. These guys are my stars!

Wizard Water Ski Club

Last, but far from least, is the grand old lady of them all - Wizard Water Ski Club. The club has been in existence since the mid-sixties, and has been the starting place for many skiers who, after gaining experience in club life, struck out on their own site ventures. The story begins with a group of snow skiers who started the aqua region of the Edmonton Ski Club. To name a few: George and Marlene Brummell, Gail Wallace, Patrick Collison, Andi Pallas, Bob Mitchell... They started out at Sandy Beach but the water was not deep enough, so they tried Jackfish Lake, but that did not work either. One of the members was talking to the local butcher in Calmar, and came to know that there was land owned by a Mrs. Gill, that could be acquired as a potential club site! The club exists on that very site today.

The site was an old coal mine, so it was basically a big slag heap. But soon members built small one room shacks and others risked driving down the nonexistent ski club "road", with tent trailers. Eventually they constructed a club house which held a few more people than the little shacks. "In those days, baby bottles cooled in the small creek along with the beer," Liz Pallas chuckles. "We all got along great."

Unfortunately, the club house burned in the eighties, along with all the memorabilia. It also forced the members to leave their boats at the far east end of the lake at one of the cottage owner's place for a period of time. In the "old days" the Wizard Water Ski club would host the Wizard World Cup at what is now known as Jubilee Park, across the lake and down from the ski club. The Alberta-renowned Wizard World Cup is now put on at Shalom Park.

Adding to its historic claim was the putting on of a water ski show on the North Saskatchewan River for Klondike days which included jumping, over under slalom skiing, deep water backwards tricking, kite flying with BIRDMAN Jones, and parachute skiing. There was even an incident when a person was run over on the jump by a canoe.....oops! Try to get the Leduc Hospital to believe that one!

As members started to buy their own places along the lake, a younger group took over the WWSC. Among that group is national Hall of Famer, Vern Oberg, whose history with the province and the club go back even farther. According to Vern, a Skimmer Club existed. Run by his father, they did pyramids, triple jumping, double jumping, with Vern skiing in between them! He admits to being hit once - or twice! Audiences loved the crashes! He talks about doing a show at Lac La Biche with John Berg (former president) when huge wind came up, and he was supposed to barefoot - in three to five foot swells! He instructed John to drive in the swells, and in his words, "Barefoot, I did!" He also claims Wizard "recruited" him!

Recruited or not, Oberg certainly helped to put Wizard Club on the map. "He was a mentor to our boys when they were young. Members of the club, as well as a teaching the new way of slalom skiing," says Liz.



Club History

And from Vern: “Just happy that my dad got me involved because he has made me reach goals I would have never achieved without this sport and I have taken the challenge to the highest degree and dined and made friends with Presidents of countries and Olympic committees.” (And many, many others in Alberta, Vern!)

Wizard Lake Club is alive and well these days. The Wizard World Cup is a classic! Lots of water shenanigans. Lots of socializing. Some things never, and shouldn't, change!



Club History

