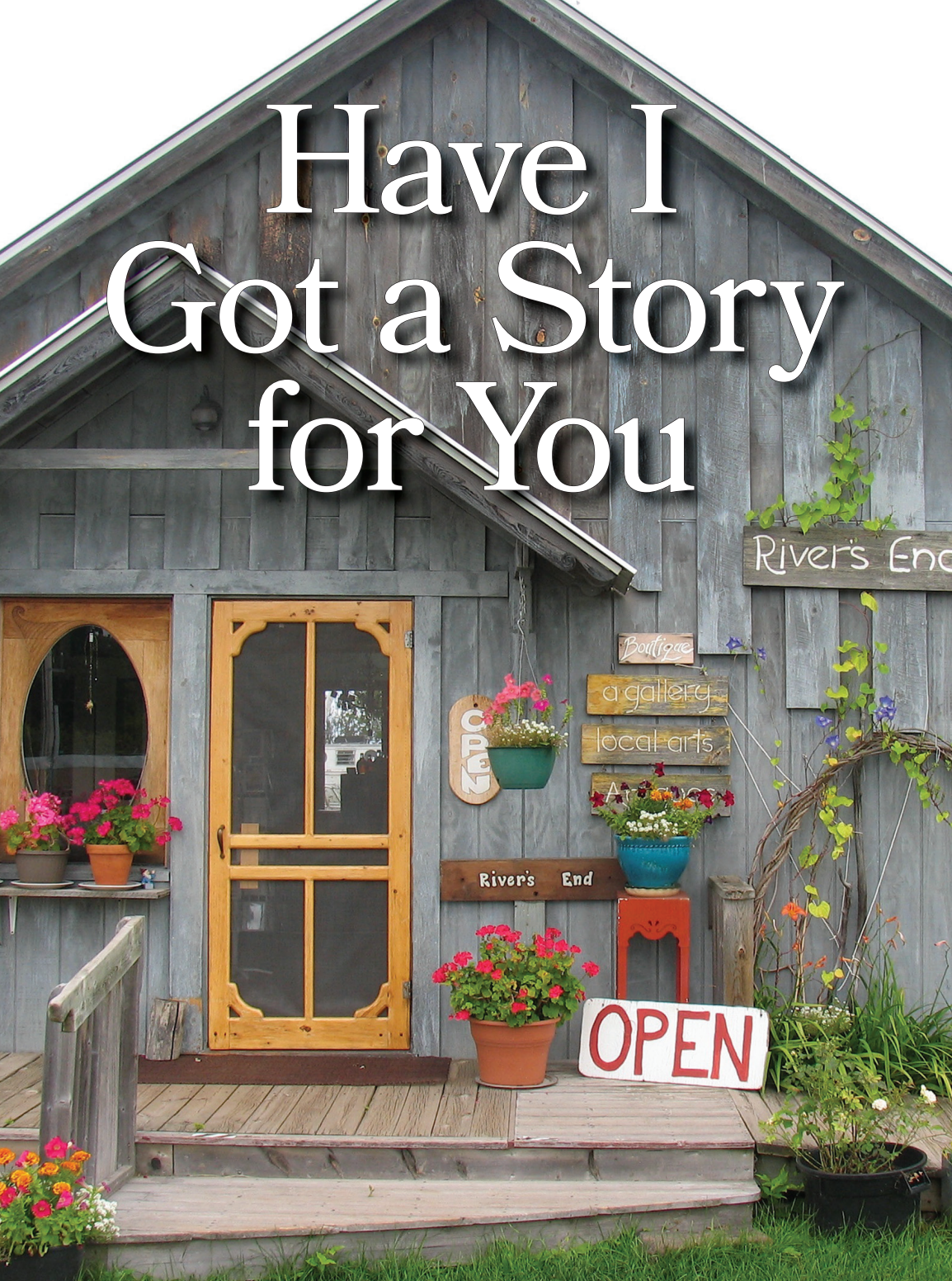


Have I Got a Story for You



Hope McLeod

Praise for *Have I Got a Story for You*

Reading *Have I Got a Story for You* is like a wind-swept day of beachcombing — a jewel of beach glass here, a water-carved rock there, an interesting twist of driftwood — until your pockets are full of treasures and stories. In this gem of a book, Hope McLeod masterfully weaves together the wave-tossed strands of humble heroism, hidden talent, boundless love, and just plain grit scrolled deep into the hearts and lives of the lake-charmed few who call this coast home. If stories are the threads that bind us together as a community, Hope's book is the cleat hitch that holds us fast to this place and to each other.

— Jeff Rennie, author of *Jewels on the Water: Lake Superior's Apostle Islands* and contributor to *Backpacker*, *Reader's Digest*, and *National Geographic Traveler*



Good journalism is about finding truth. Across her years as a reporter for the *Bayfield County Journal*, Hope McLeod has found beautiful truths in many hidden places and shining in so many unlikely faces. This collection of some of her best articles offers stories of hope, courage, humor, sadness, and certainly wisdom. With luminous prose, a huge heart, and a journalist's eye for detail, McLeod has created a treasure chest filled with people whose ordinary appearance masks extraordinary lives.

— William Kent Krueger, *New York Times* bestselling author of the Cork O'Connor series



For someone with both passion and reverence for Lake Superior and for authentic writing — the kind that honors place and the people who inhabit it — Hope McLeod's anthology, *Have I Got a Story for You*, is a gift.

— Journalist Jacqui Banaszynski, winner of the Pulitzer Prize in feature writing



In these times of techno-tribalism, how grateful I am for chroniclers like Hope McLeod and the record she keeps of the quieter moments, quieter places, and quieter citizens. Here are the rewards of civility and civilization if we will keep them.

— Michael Perry, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Population: 485, Truck, Coop, Visiting Tom*, and *Montaigne in Barn Boots*



Every community needs a storyteller, and in her new collection of stories from the Bayfield peninsula Hope McLeod grasps the role and runs with it. These are tales of artists and eccentrics, of life, love and occasional loss, of people searching for beauty or, in one case, for UFOs, characters all who together make up the rich fabric of life along the edge of Lake Superior.

— Dennis McCann, former columnist for *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and author of *This Superior Place: Stories of Bayfield and the Apostle Islands*



Hope's body of work with the *Ashland Daily Press* and the *Bayfield County Journal* on the arts, literature and music has been extraordinary, and greatly appreciated by the entire Chequamegon Bay community.

— Theron O'Connor, owner of Apostle Islands Booksellers in Bayfield, Wisconsin

Have I Got a Story for You

Stories & photographs from
the South Shore of Lake Superior

by Hope McLeod



Washburn, Wisconsin

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Other books by Hope McLeod:
The Place We Begin (2012)



Aunt Cara
(March 3, 1871–January 22, 1956)

Gratitude to all my angels both past and present, most especially to Caroline Dale Snedeker, aka Aunt Cara, author of 14 young adult historical fiction books. Not only did this great aunt of mine feed my hungry imagination as a child, she also helped feed this book by delivering occasional royalty checks from her distant cloud.

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Preface

By Paul Mitchell

Newspaper reporters are a breed apart, often as unique and quirky as the subjects of their best stories. After two decades as a newspaper editor, I thought I'd seen them all.

And then I met Hope McLeod.

In 2013 I left my office-bound position to work from home both as an online editor and as editor and designer for the *Bayfield County Journal*. I found it to be an entertaining and enlightening paper, with well-written and engaging community columns filling its inside pages. The meat of the paper, however, was the front-page stories written by “reporter” Hope McLeod.

I put the word reporter in parentheses in Hope's case because, as you will discover in these pages, Hope McLeod is not your usual reporter. Hope is an artist who uses her talent for wordsmithing to bring to life the stories that make her community so unique, so diverse and so culturally rich.

In news writing, we often have to “crank it out” to meet deadlines. We conduct interviews, take photographs, make phone calls and do a little research, and then we grab the keyboard and tap the stories out as quickly as we can to make deadline. Stories are written for this week's paper, to engage and enlighten the reader for a time. Hopefully they're well read before they end up at the bottom of the birdcage.

Some stories, however, require extra care and extra crafting. We spend more time writing and researching. We tweak and edit and rewrite. We get second opinions, we do follow-up interviews and we obsess a bit. These are the stories we remember long after they're finished.

In Hope's case, every story is treated this way. Every story is a special event. Every story is a tale for the ages. For starters, Hope goes beyond information gathering to really get to know her subjects. She listens and photographs with care and with empathy. Once Hope begins writing, she chooses every word and every phrase with meticulous care, reaching into her background as a poet and songwriter to create stories that sing from the page.

The year that I spent working with Hope was a difficult one in my own life. My son was recovering from a devastating spinal cord injury and we were traveling to the Twin Cities for therapy constantly. And during that year I had a recovery of my own after a minor heart attack. Instead of being work, editing Hope's stories was a respite. She has a unique talent for

finding people whose tales inspire and encourage the rest of us to endure our own trials, to be true to our values and to reach for our dreams.

Working with Hope was a new experience for me. When Hope turned in a story, it was the beginning of a process of give and take, of crafting and polishing. I would make suggestions; she would build on them or come up with new ideas. There would be a flurry of emails, and often my phone would ring before I'd even had a chance to open them. "Paul, have you read my emails yet? Here's what I'm thinking..."

For Hope, a story is never finished until it's on the page and printed, and sometimes not even then. There were times she'd call and ask me to change something in the online version. Too late for print, she'd say, but....

Working with Hope is challenging and fulfilling. Through each story I found the opportunity to be inspired and to grow. Her job was never an easy one, and I'm glad I was able to offer her encouragement and a sympathetic ear when necessary, as she did for me.

Over the years I've heard many reporters and columnists say they'd like to combine their stories in book form. I smile, I nod, and I think to myself, "Good lord. Don't do it."

News is written to be timely, not timeless.

When Hope told me she wanted to put her stories in book form, I thought to myself, "What a great idea."

By combining this selection of stories, Hope has created a volume that community members will cherish, one that paints a portrait of life in one of the most unique communities in the Midwest. With this book, the recent history of the Bayfield peninsula is literally at your fingertips. It's not the history of mayhem and meetings and events that often populates the front page of newspapers. It's the history of a community as seen and heard through the eyes and words of the people who live in it, who make the Bayfield peninsula a one-of-a-kind Wisconsin treasure.

Even though Hope has left her position at the newspaper, her role as storyteller and documentarian of her community will continue and will endure.

And we're all the richer for it. ❖

Paul Mitchell
Publisher/Managing Editor
Sawyer County Record, Hayward, Wisconsin

Introduction

By Hope McLeod

Have I Got a Story for You is a collection of 35 feature stories I wrote for the *Bayfield County Journal* (BCJ) between 2012-2017. Though previously published in this Northern Wisconsin newspaper, also its sister paper, the *Ashland Daily Press* (ADP), these stories have been newly edited to give them a longer shelf life. Paul Mitchell, my former editor for the BCJ from 2013-2014, helped me do the honors. Mitchell taught me practically everything I know about good journalism. So if you have any complaints, blame him. (Only joking.) That's another thing he taught me: how not to take myself, or my work, so seriously, which I do.

During my tenure at the paper, which ended on December 24, 2017, I penned 749 stories. I also took thousands of photographs. Obviously I had to leave a few out of this collection. Selecting content for the book took two hyperventilating months, during which time I received excellent CPR from Demaris Brinton, co-owner of the Apostle Islands Booksellers in Bayfield.

“Choose stories that surprise you,” she advised, “ones that pop, and show off the uniqueness and diversity of the characters living in this region.” Her point was that if a New Yorker walks into the bookstore, why should they care about Podunk, Wisconsin? Here's why.

Margaret Wheatley, an American writer and management consultant, said recently that what we need as a society is to create “islands of sanity” — respites from the challenges we face on a currently overcrowded and stressed-out planet. As a reporter I discovered many islands of sanity along the South Shore of Lake Superior, my beat for six years. Though not all of them good news stories, the ones I've chosen for this collection share several distinct qualities: heroism, resilience, and heartbreakingly beautiful responses to an environment that both giveth and taketh away.

It's not easy living in Northern Wisconsin with its occasional polar vortex and short growing season. But the people who choose to live here have adapted to their tough surroundings in unique ways, like creating gardens of Eden out of hard clay soil or bell sculptures fashioned out of recycled CO2 oxygen tanks — two subjects in this book. Following Demaris's lead, I chose the most unique characters I could find.

Why a book of stories previously published? Two reasons: one, I wanted to provide a keepsake for the community, something to pass onto the next generation. Two, I wanted to inspire strangers who randomly

walk into the bookstore to pick up my book and find they can't put it down once discovering people like mountaineer Lori Schneider, who despite MS, has summited the seven tallest mountains in the world. These stories need to be shared with a wider audience, if nothing else, to say to readers, "If Lori can do this, I can."

Once I wrote a piece about author Tom Vennum, former Senior Ethnomusicologist Emeritus for the Smithsonian Institution. Vennum summered on Madeline Island and wrote several books on Ojibwe music and culture. In one of them he referred to the traditional birch bark canoe, still built by the Anishinaabe in the region: "...ingeniously shaped, and sewed together with roots of the tamarack...They are water-tight and ride upon the water as light as a cork." I like to think of these stories as little watertight boats floating down the river of time that can be picked up by curious hands wondering where these vessels came from and what can be learned from them.

Many people have asked how I got into journalism. First reason is my mother, former art columnist for the *New Milford Times*, a small weekly newspaper in Connecticut where I grew up. I often accompanied her on interviews with famous artists, such as mobile inventor, Sandy Calder, sculptor, Henry Moore, or historic barn painter, Eric Sloane. Bigger-than-life characters, their stories left a big impression on me. But I didn't pursue journalism right away. Instead I became a professional singer/songwriter for over 30 years. Like a broadside balladeer, I documented and crooned the accounts of interesting people's lives and events encountered wherever I lived — Connecticut, Colorado, Europe, California, and Wisconsin.

I moved to Wisconsin in 1990 with T. Bruce Bowers, now my husband but also my former producer. We met in California, where he helped usher in my first solo recording, "Time to Dream," and later in Wisconsin a second one, "Frozen in Time." Bruce has been the fiddler for the Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua in Bayfield for over 35 years. That first summer I fell in love with the tent, and Warren Nelson's history-based musicals. I eventually became a cast member in two house shows and performed a solo concert each year. I also toured throughout the U.S. solo, or in duos and trios. In 1997 I wrote and produced my first history-inspired musical, "Frozen in Time," featuring stories and songs about unique women in the region. Funded by the Wisconsin Sesquicentennial Commission to celebrate the state's 150-year birthday in 1998, this journey awakened the journalist in me, as I conducted interviews, researched and deep-listened to countless stories. After some health challenges, I quit music and became a full time journalist in 2012. The rest is history written down in this book. I hope you enjoy reading these stories as much as I enjoyed writing them. ❖



Lifetime smelter Louis Huesmann from Center City, Minnesota, waits patiently by his drop net at Bayview Park in Ashland on April 7, 2012.

1.

Smelt on the run

4/12/12

“Smelt on the Run” was my first story for the Bayfield County Journal. Eager to please my new boss, former editor Wanda Moeller, I hyper-dedicated myself to the task at hand: following the annual smelt migration. Bibbed, polar-fleeced and slickered, I spent an entire week shivering next to a cult of smelters camped out along the South Shore of Lake Superior for several weeks in April. I have to admit, this was no July clambake like I’d grown up with in New England. Though locals called it spring, the zero temps and occasional snow flurries I experienced contradicted their claim. Nonetheless, being my virgin story, I was thrilled to be included in this unique, shivering circle of fisherfolk.

Everyone has their theories but, “Smelt do what they want,” said Zack Jurewicz from Anglers All, a popular bait shop in Ashland.

What this three-ounce, seven to nine-inch long, rainbow-sided trickster wants to do is reproduce. And what anglers want to do is catch them, which is easier said than done — especially this month.

“At one time you could easily fill a pick-up truck in a few hours,” reported Lake Superior Charters.

But that was back in the 1960s before the weather changes, like ice melting in March, for instance, instead of April.

Ordinarily content in the deeper, darker waters of Lake Superior, rainbow smelt (*Osmerus mordax*) usually migrate to warmer shallows to spawn for one week anytime between April 1 and May 1, after ice melt and when surface temps have risen to at least 42 degrees. You may have noticed dozens of anglers huddled around campfires up and down the coast from Port Wing to Ashland this month, like they’ve done for the last 70 years, ever since this non-native species was introduced to the Great Lakes in 1928.

Officially the season opened April 1, yet due to earlier-than-usual ice melt, harvesters have been casting their nets since the end of March. The only ones who haven’t heard about the news are the smelt.

Louis Huesmann from Center City, Minnesota has smelted his entire life. He came to Ashland last year from April 14-24 and caught “more than anyone would want,” but so far this year he’s only harvested a lamprey eel and four smelt. Hardly enough to feed his family, unless you like French-sized servings.

“Had some misinformation from our contacts, which brought us up a little earlier,” grumbled Huesmann.

Along with a clutch of RV campers, he has been roosting with his wife and in-laws since March 29th at Bayview Park in Ashland, waiting for smelt school to be let out. Every night he sets up his wind break on the dock so he and his family don’t get blown over by the monstrous northeast winds. Because of three knee surgeries, he no longer uses the traditional seine nets cast from shore and hauled in by hand repeatedly over the course of an evening. Instead, he lowers a drop net from the dock.

“Frame’s made of spring steel. Looks like a pup tent with no sides,” he said.

Huesmann sits in his portable chair with his wife and mother-in-law, and lifts the net out every few minutes after sundown. But why not just go home since the fish haven’t run in the last 12 days?

“Because it’s fun, and we’ve made a lot of new friends. It’s really just one happy community,” he said.

Of course, they'd be a lot happier with some fish to fry.

Smelt is a matter of taste, said Huesmann, who loves this fishy fish. "It's like fish-flavored French fries. Fry 'em up and swallow 'em down whole," he chuckled.

Gail Bodin, a member of the renowned Bodin fishing family from Bayfield, recalls from her childhood, "First we took the heads off, then cut them open. Didn't bother scaling and we always left their tails on," after which her family dipped the critters in beer batter and cornmeal and tossed them into the campfire fry pan.

Though not as popular as it once was, there's also another ritual related to smelt consumption.

"Fishermen are a superstitious lot," says Peter Stevens from the Bayfield Fish Hatchery.

For good luck, he said, rookie smelters are expected to bite the heads off of their first catch.

"I could never do that," said Ms. Bodin, puckering her lips.

What she could do, however, was party hearty, along with everyone else in the region, geared up to celebrate this end-of-winter family tradition.

"Cars would be lined up on both sides of the highway at Bayview Beach, also Sandbar Beach in Ashland, behind the former Bodin's sport store," she said. "Smelters peppered the shoreline."

Bodin's cousin Jeff recalled, "The store stayed open until 2 a.m. some nights, selling hats, nets — whatever people needed — even smelt if it rained, so disappointed anglers didn't go home hungry."

Commercial fishermen have always had the advantage over recreational smelters in that they spread huge trawling nets further out, in the middle of the lake, where smelt live the rest of the year. They also post-pound nets close to shore, on lines about six feet out from several docks in the region. Luckily, this year both Bodin Fisheries in Bayfield and Halverson's in Cornucopia have been catching plenty of smelt, enough for the Herbster's Annual Smelt Fry on April 14.

As for the recreational smelters? Well, they're still waiting, as frigid breezes blow and temps go down to freezing at night. Nonetheless, it's beautiful underneath the stars, huddled around a campfire, and the full moon pointing its finger at a darkened spot in the lake as if to say, "Here I am. Catch me if you can."

Regardless of what's inside or outside the net, stories and good cheer abound. That's because it's more about family, community, and friendships formed around this ephemeral creature that crunches and tastes like French fries. That is, if you can catch them. Though dubious to this writer, some think it's worth the wait. ❖



Coastguard boats pick up victims during a kayak event on Lake Superior.
(August 8, 2013)

2. Rescue mission in the fog

9/7/13

At 11 a.m. on August 28, 2013 the United States Coast Guard received a distress call.

“Bayfield Station, I have six overturned kayaks and 12 people in the water. We were heading west on the north channel and had Bayfield in sight, but fog rolled in and a power boat came in the middle of us and caused this mess. We were heading west by southwest at 245 degrees and estimate we are 1-point-5 miles due south of Hermit Island.”

They had one female eight and a-half months pregnant going into labor; someone with a dislocated shoulder fading in and out of consciousness; and two challenged individuals, one hearing-impaired and one sight-impaired.

Mauricette Keeley, the watch stander (or communications controller) at the station, conveyed the message to boatswain’s mate Chief William Davidson who immediately dispatched two rescue boats to the site. Due to fog thick as a witch’s brew, it would take 11 minutes as opposed to

7 or 8 to reach their destination. EMTs were contacted to stand by at Royce Point with ambulances.

Halfway to Hermit Island the crew grew suspicious. Why hadn't Davidson insisted upon pedal-to-the medal like he usually does? Every minute counts in dire circumstances such as this. That's because it was only a drill.

"I would like to have kept the suspense up, but with the fog I thought it was unsafe to let them proceed thinking it was real. People tend to rush things," Davidson said.

The chief didn't want to needlessly endanger his crew. Nonetheless, the Coast Guard played along and responded with gusto.

Chris Bandy, the Coast Guard auxiliariist who made the distress call and was also one of the kayakers, said after the drill, "Last year Petty Officer Patrick Behne and Samuel Graham from the Coast Guard station in Bayfield came up with an idea to have a mass kayak rescue drill that would involve the Coast Guard and the National Park Service — the two agencies that would respond to a kayak disaster on the water. So they approached me, and I took off with it."

Like last year, Bandy enlisted two of the top guides from each of the best outfitters in the region — Living Adventures, Trek & Trail, Lost Creek Adventures, Wilderness Inquiry, Pikes Bay Marina, and also a few representatives from the National Park Service.

"We went about five miles out into the north channel and I made a distress call over the VHS Channel 16," he said.

Bandy didn't provide longitude and latitude, otherwise it would have made the mission too easy. Both years they've had a great response from the agencies involved.

"We'd like to eventually do two a year," Davidson said.

As it is, Lake Superior keeps them extremely busy. Bill Gover, commander of the Coast Guard Auxiliary's Apostle Islands Flotilla, said two weeks prior to the drill they responded to an SAR (search and rescue) after a squall unexpectedly rolled onto Lake Superior.

"There were four separate incidents that the station responded to, and from what I was told, the boat that was out there working those cases never got back to the station. They would just finish, then they were on to the next one," Gover said.

He said it was a perfectly calm day with blue sky and a lake that mirrored the heavens, but by mid-afternoon, the water was frothing and heaving two and three-foot waves. He commented that on days like this people get fooled.

"Based on the conditions they see, they say, 'Oh well, if it gets bad I'll just come back to shore,'" Gover said.



Distressed kayakers set off a smoke flare to signal for help.

But in many cases, they don't have a chance. The purpose of these drills is to engage the different agencies in an opportunity to practice their collective response to mass incidents.

In addition to drills and real SARs, the Coast Guard also provides water safety education. People need to know what the conditions are, what their skill level is, and what equipment is needed, Gover said. For this reason the Coast Guard developed what's called the Paddle Smart Program.

"Auxiliarist Richard Carver was the one that started to implement it here in the Apostle Islands," Bandy said. "I got involved and took it over for Mr. Carver two years ago."

Since 2011, the Paddle Smart Program has significantly reduced what had become a rising number of kayak fatalities in the Apostle Islands. Bandy has devoted over 700 hours toward increasing kayak safety awareness both through public education as well as by managing disaster drills. Incidentally, Bandy was recognized on August 24 as the 2012 Coast Guard Auxiliarist of the Year in a ceremony held in San Diego, California.

Water safety cannot be overemphasized, Davidson said.

“Recreation can turn into disaster quickly on the lake,” he said. “People sometimes make irrational decisions going into the water.”

For instance, in a real scenario, a woman eight and a-half months pregnant probably shouldn’t hop into a kayak unless she’s trying to induce labor, which would be a really bad idea. Davidson said the Coast Guard likes to assume only able-bodied individuals recreate on the lake but knows that’s not always the case.

“All too often we respond to folks that shouldn’t have been on the water in the first place,” Davidson said.

Carver, like the other auxiliarists in the region, owns his own boat and played an important role in the August 28 drill. He, his steel cruiser and four other auxiliarists were enlisted to partake in a three-pronged mission: one, to practice a towing drill with another Coast Guard boat that would meet them a few miles out on the lake; two, to test former active duty Coastguardsman Tom Erickson, as an auxiliarist commander of the boat; and three, to bring the six empty kayaks from the disaster drill back to Bayfield, since the victims would be transported by rescue boats.

After the auxiliarists practiced their towing drill, out of the blue the commander shouted, “Man overboard portside!”

Of course, this was part of the drill too. Nonetheless they lifted the victim, a two-foot foam buoy, out of the water and checked for vital signs and ABCs (airway, breathing and circulation). After these maneuvers, the kayak mass disaster drill began.

First the kayakers set off a smoke flare so the Coast Guard could find them more easily in the fog. Then two rescue boats arrived — a 45-footer powered by hydroelectric power as well as a 25-footer. Both went right to work attending to the victims. Christina Vik, the person simulating a dislocated shoulder, was placed into a stokes litter and was carefully hoisted out of the water onto a rescue boat. Each victim was handled with care and safely secured on board before heading back to shore.

Meanwhile, the auxiliarists had to contend with six wandering kayaks, which they necklaced together and towed back to Bayfield. Kayaks and kayak guides reunited, everyone carried on with their day, minus the fog and the drama. ❖



Storyteller/author Virginia Hirsch brings Bayfield history to life.

3.

A guided walk in Bayfield Cemetery has listeners' hair standing on end

9/4/15

During the Victorian era there was a tremendous fear of being buried alive. Edgar Allen Poe perpetuated this fear by writing terrifying stories like one about a woman's corpse found clawing at her crypt, years after her burial. As a result, Victorians often tied a string to the deceased's wrist, which was attached to a bell above ground the dead could ring should this ill fate befall them.

“They call that a dead-ringer,” joked professional storyteller Virginia Hirsch on her “Dying to Get In” guided walk on August 21 in the Bayfield Cemetery.

Hirsch has been leading walking tours since 2003, winding through the village of Bayfield and uphill to the cemetery, sharing interpretative and bone-chilling tales about the town’s history. Entertaining as well as educational, she often dresses in Victorian costume and assumes a character.

“Good afternoon and welcome to my home,” she said, pointing to the tombstones surrounding her. “I am Mrs. Curry Bell. And yes, I am a permanent resident in the Bayfield Cemetery. Oh, it’s a friendly place. When I died during the 1887 typhoid epidemic, I was buried next to my infant son. My husband, Curry Bell, is here too, along with the second Mrs. Bell. Oh, we get along just fine.”

A swift breeze lifted a tuft of her hair as if teased by an invisible hand. Creepy tales are Hirsch’s specialty. The real Hirsch has been fascinated with the cross-pollination between storytelling and history for decades. Her educational background includes a B.A. in English and speech from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire followed by an M.A. and Ph.D. in theater from the University of Kansas. She started her business, Bayfield Heritage Tours, in 2003 after taking a ghost walk in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Since that time she’s developed a half-dozen walking tours as well as a series of self-guided walking books, including: “Dying to Get In,” “A Walk Up Washington Avenue,” and “A Stroll Down Rittenhouse Avenue.” She’s also produced an audio CD called, “Ghosts & Legends of Old Bayfield.”

A camerawoman from KBJR TV showed up on the August 15 tour, gathering material for the 10 o’clock news. She appeared ghostly herself, at times hunched behind a tombstone trying to get the best and spookiest angle of this costumed lady leading her pod of 20 rapt listeners.

“My husband remarried,” Mrs. Bell continued. “After all, I left behind three young children who needed a mother. And Curry, well, he was a busy man. He was the owner and editor of the *Bayfield County Press*. So of course he needed a wife at home to manage things.”

Mrs. Curry introduced some of her “friends” in the cemetery, including Emmanuel Luick (1886–1946), a lighthouse keeper on Sand Island for 50 years. Also, a few paces downhill, she bowed her head next to a spired tombstone on which were etched the names of four small children.

“Half of the children born in the 19th century died before the age of two,” she bemoaned.

Further down the road, formerly used for horse and carriages, she paused in front of several graves belonging to Civil War heroes, also pioneers who felled trees and whittled the first town of Bayfield. The most horrifying story of the day, however, involved a grizzly tale about the 1942

Bayfield flood that whisked coffins out of their graves, scattering remains everywhere. She led listeners to the edge of the ravine where the flood had surged downhill into town, destroying everything in its path.

Hirsch peppered her tour with interesting facts about Victorian funeral customs. For instance, prior to the Civil War, families prepared loved ones for burial in their homes, holding visitations for the deceased in their parlors. However, that custom changed during the war, because soldiers died so far away from home. As a result embalming and professional funeral parlors were invented.

Cemetery walks have recently become a national pastime. Irene S. Levine, a free-lance journalist, wrote, "Wandering through a cemetery or taking a guided tour allows us to learn about different cultural traditions and the changing attitudes about life and death over the years. It also lets us reflect on the unique stories of the people buried there. Many cemetery visitors say the experience can be profoundly spiritual."

Several days after her walk Hirsch said, "Cemeteries are not everyone's cup of tea. I find them a wonderful steppingstone to our history and much more 'alive' than just a book or historical record, as important as they are. Like our forefathers 100 years ago, a stroll among the decorative stones on a sunny day can calm and lift the spirits, for me anyway."

Hirsch owns a summer home in Bayfield with her husband Mitch and has been coming up here since she was a child. Though familiar with the talk of the town, her guided tours are derived from newspaper articles written by journalist Eleanor Knight for the *Bayfield County Press* from 1950-1953 in her book, "Tales of Bayfield Pioneers." From this material she's crafted a unique style for which Hirsch has received much recognition, including a GEM Award from Midwest Travel Writers Association (2005), and the Wisconsin Lucy Beck Award (2011), the only storytelling award in Wisconsin.

Starting this summer Hirsch began leasing the walking-tour portion of her business (minus the cemetery walks) to Mike and Carol Arvidson, guides she's employed in the past. She still participates in special events, but for the most part is dedicating her time to writing self-guided walking books.

The tour ended with Mrs. Bell standing next to her own tombstone, a halo of light crowning her bonnet as the sun set behind her.

"Everyone wants to believe there is more to death than just a quiet grave," she reflected.

Bringing these stories to light does more than highlight a few lives. It stimulates a deeper conversation about the mystery of death, the rituals surrounding it, and most importantly, what it means to those left behind.

To find out more about Hirsch go to: www.bayfieldheritagetours.com. ❖



Marc Wanvig stands next to his photograph “Cornucopia Marina.”

4. Water-themed photography show sets sail at Washburn Cultural Center

8/11/16

To journey with Marc Wanvig’s work requires a shift in perception and a softening of the edges. Are they watercolor paintings or photographs? And does it matter?

Two rooms of Wanvig’s shimmery photographs were on display at the Washburn Cultural Center for the month of August in 2016. Though predominantly water and maritime-themed, he also included portraits

and a study in California trees. Also, his artist wife, Dorothy Hoffman, exhibited a few of her genuine watercolor paintings.

Entering the first room of the gallery from Bayfield Street, visitors were immediately greeted by a wall of Wanvig's portraits with familiar faces from the Chequamegon Bay area: Sadie Buechner, an aproned and dusty-palmed pastry chef from Coco's Bakery; Yazmin Bowers, a singer/songwriter with a passion for salsa music; and Wanvig's 11-year-old neighbor who had just lost her dog the day the photograph was taken. Her universal expression of grief reached far beyond the perimeters of the picture frame.

Wanvig and Hoffman, retired for eight and three years respectively, have owned a home in Cornucopia for 24 years where they paddle, swim and create art on the shores of Lake Superior. But they also love to travel, especially to watery places.

"Water can be nurturing or it can be the death of us," said Wanvig, giving a tour of the exhibit and pausing in front of "Ocean Force," a fishing fleet he photographed in Oregon.

Like many of his pictures, this one could easily be mistaken for a watercolor. Classic photography, he said, just isn't that interesting to him. So he tweaks his images in Photoshop, adding soft-edges to them.

"It's quite an involved process that's evolved over the years. You just take a standard photograph and do a sketch outline of the prominent features, then add the color back in, plus some other Photoshop techniques to enhance the picture. It's about a 20-minute process," he said.

In the second room of the gallery he pointed to a photo taken off the coast of Spain: an historic Mexican naval training ship blasting a cannon into the Mediterranean Sea. Wanvig melded the pink and orange explosion into a mottled seascape emulating an Impressionistic painting.

Wanvig's simple titles — "The Red Boat," "Ocean Force," "The Fo'c'sle"— belie a complexity that begs viewers to take a second look at what they thought was just a boat. His photos evoke the energy behind objects, thousands of molecules dancing on water, a subject he finds endlessly fascinating.

"There's a common theme around the world that water is a metaphor for so many things. People's lives and livelihood all depend on water. Of course we probably all came from water," he reflected.

Standing in front of his photograph, "The Eagle," a weathered, dry-docked fishing boat in Cornucopia, Wanvig explained how he's so old that he remembers when this boat was in the water.

"At one time it was owned by a Frenchman who used it for scuba diving in Lake Superior," he said.



“The Red Boat” is one of Wanvig’s computer-enhanced photographs.

Each photograph has an accompanying story such as one he took on a Saturday morning in Paris five years ago.

“There had to have been 100 sculls like this one coming down the Seine,” he said, pointing to a skinny craft with a small crew of paddlers on board. “I stood on this bridge where lovers come to communicate their love by taking a lock and putting it on the bridge. The bridge is full of locks. I shot the photograph looking down on the boats.”

Wanvig has been taking photographs for over 50 years, both looking down on boats and jumping out of airplanes. His passion for photography began when he and a buddy enlisted in the U.S. Army at age 18 because they “wanted to have an adventure.” Adventure came in the form of serving in the 101st Airborne Division.

They were first deployed to Miami during the Cuban Missile crisis where they trained for a possible air assault that never happened. While training Wanvig always took his camera with him, even during parachute drills, which is how he sustained his one and only military injury.

“I was jumping out of a plane and didn’t have my camera strapped down. So it came up and hit me in the nose. I had a bloody nose all the way down until I hit the ground. The medic immediately ran over saying, ‘This guy really needs help,’ but I was fine,” said Wanvig.

His active duty also took him to Guatemala and Oxford, Mississippi where in 1962 the city was placed under martial law. Things heated up

after James Meredith, an American civil rights activist, tried to enroll in the University of Mississippi as the first African American student, which incited the “Integration at Ole Miss” riot, where Wanvig waited with both rifle and camera in hand.

Though none of his active service photos were in the August show, there were some military related portraits taken on a trip to Belgium, Hoffman’s ancestral homeland.

“Every seven years they do a re-creation of Napoleon’s march through Belgium. Thousands of people dress up in costumes and parade around and fire muskets,” said Wanvig, standing at attention in front of a photo he took of an officer on horseback. “There are thousands of horses involved. This was early in the morning and Napoleon and his mascot were charging ahead.”

After three years in the service, Wanvig charged ahead with his own life, returning to Minneapolis where he grew up. Funded by the U.S. Army, he completed his education and became a science instructor for over 40 years. He met his wife in the Twin Cities and throughout this time worked as a freelance photographer shooting weddings, student headshots, and dancers for Hamlin University, St. Thomas University and the University of Minnesota.

But what Wanvig does best, what really causes heads to do pirouettes, are his dreamy interpretations of reality. Like desert mirages something fizzles and dances on the fringes of his straight lines. Something beyond ordinary existence touches a place of longing, stimulating an urge to merge with the extraordinary, if only for an hour, traipsing from room to room at the Washburn Cultural Center. ❖

About the Author



Hope McLeod is an award-winning journalist, poet and songwriter from Washburn, Wisconsin. As a staff writer for the *Bayfield County Journal* and *Ashland Daily Press* from 2012-2017 she penned 749 feature stories, four of which garnered Wisconsin Newspaper Association awards. She's also a

contributing writer to: *5ForWomen*, *Wisconsin Trails*, *Home Education Magazine*, and *Verse Wisconsin*. Her poetry has been published in *The Place We Begin* (a chapbook), *Writers Read—Volume 1 & II*, *New Millennium*, *RAVN*, and *Wisconsin People & Ideas*.

Prior to becoming a journalist Hope was a professional singer/songwriter and musician for 30 years, performing and recording throughout the United States and Europe. She has two solo recordings: *Time to Dream* (1990), and *Frozen in Time* (1998), which also became a stage production celebrating Wisconsin's Sesquicentennial in 1998. Three of her songs were included in soundtracks for the following PBS documentary films: *On the Edge*; *In Depth: Lake Superior*; and *Old Stones of New Harmony*.

Hope is married to violinist/composer T. Bruce Bowers, a performer with the Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua. They have one daughter, Yazmin, a pianist/singer/songwriter with three CDs already under her 27-year-old belt.

When not writing Hope spends countless hours walking along the South Shore of Lake Superior, skipping stones and scouting for her next story, poem or song. ❖

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Have I Got a Story for You is a collection of feature stories and photographs by Hope McLeod, an award-winning journalist, poet, and songwriter from Washburn, Wisconsin. Though previously published from 2012-2017 in the *Bayfield County Journal* and its sister newspaper, the *Ashland Daily Press*, these spirited stories about people from the South Shore of Lake Superior are newly edited to outlast the events reported on.



If stories are the threads that bind us together as a community, Hope's book is the cleat hitch that holds us fast to this place and to each other.

— Jeff Rennie, author of *Jewels on the Water: Lake Superior's Apostle Islands* and contributor to *Backpacker*, *Reader's Digest*, and *National Geographic Traveler*



Every community needs a storyteller, and in her new collection of stories from the Bayfield peninsula Hope McLeod grasps the role and runs with it.

— Dennis McCann, former columnist for *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and author of *This Superior Place: Stories of Bayfield and the Apostle Islands*

For someone with both passion and reverence for Lake Superior and for authentic writing — the kind that honors place and the people who inhabit it — Hope McLeod's anthology, *Have I Got a Story for You*, is a gift.

— Journalist Jacqui Banaszynski, winner of the Pulitzer Prize in feature writing



In these times of techno-tribalism, how grateful I am for chroniclers like Hope McLeod and the record she keeps of the quieter moments, quieter places, and quieter citizens.

— Michael Perry, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Population: 485*, *Truck, Coop*, *Visiting Tom*, and *Montaigne in Barn Boots*



What a lovely, enlightening collection. So finely written, with such profound empathy and understanding.

— William Kent Krueger, *New York Times* bestselling author of the Cork O'Connor series



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