

Worth moves on, leaving his mark on community

By Mike Skubal

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Larry Worth is leaving town. People come and go, some leave their mark, some don't. Larry's leaving is noted. He has made his mark.

Worth moved to Rhinelander from Mequon in 1971, buying Birchwood Lodge on Third Lake of the Moen's chain from Dick Stevens. He had had enough of Milwaukee and wanted to relax. Worth said he never worked harder than when he ran the resort, but he had help.

Larry and Barbara Louise Worth were married 54 years before Barbara died two years ago. "She was a wonderful, wonderful girl," said Worth. The couple had three boys, who helped at the resort while growing up.

Why run a resort for 34 years? "The people," Worth said, "Some of them have been coming to Birchwood for 25 years, two generations or more."

Birchwood Lodge was founded by Charles Zirzow in 1911. It has a long history as a resort and Worth wanted to make sure it stayed that way. So did herb Mueller, the new owner.

Mueller owns Mueller's Bay Bait and Tackle and will be moving the bait shop to the grounds of the resort. Mueller is looking to continue a nearly 100 year tradition.

So the resort will remain just that, no condos, no selling off the cabins. Worth is leaving the resort business in good hands.

What of the future? You've got to go back to the past for the answer. Years ago Worth went with a girl from Shorewood, a community adjoining his hometown of Mequon. Her name was Carol Schranek.

Like so many, Larry entered the service in Word War II. And like many, he got a "dear John" letter from Carol. Life goes on.

Larry married and raised three boys. Carol married and had four children. Carol's husband died 11 years ago. Larry's wife passed away two years ago.

Carol sent a letter of condolence. There was a class reunion, e-mails, and, finally, a visit to Carol's home in Dallas.

"It was just like old times, like we were never separated," said Larry. He is straightforward about this new relationship at age 78. "It's about loneliness, companionship," said Larry, "The decision was easy, we have the same background."

The resort is in good hands. Families are grown. Larry moves to Dallas this week. He grew up on a river, lived his life on Third Lake, and now will watch the sun set over the pool in Dallas.

Larry Worth leaves a legacy. He served two terms on the Oneida County Board and was responsible for getting the new law enforcement complex built.

Larry worked with Dave Havel and others on the new Chamber of Commerce building in Rhinelander. And like all true handymen, Larry actually did the blockwork on the bandshell.

Larry's son Ted summed it up, "Dad has to live in an ongoing construction site. He's already torn up the kitchen at his new home in Dallas."

