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Wisconsin's Door Peninsula

"A KINGDOM SO DELICIOUS"

By WILLIAM S. ELLIS
National Geographic Staff

Photographs by TED ROZUMALSKI, *Black Star*

DARKNESS CAME QUICKLY as wind and rain gusted out of the sky to wreck the drowsy stillness of three o'clock on a warm summer afternoon. From atop a high limestone cliff, I watched the waters of the strait below bunch up into swells and then become driving beams of frothy fury. A skiff torn loose from its mooring slammed into the base of the cliff and backed off as kindling.

Churning, whirling, bloated with arrogance, this rip of water between a peninsula and the islands off its tip mirrored all the gray grimness of the name given it by French explorers many years ago. *Porte des Morts*, they called it—literally Door of the Dead, but colloquially translated Death's Door. On its floor rest the bones of hundreds of ships.

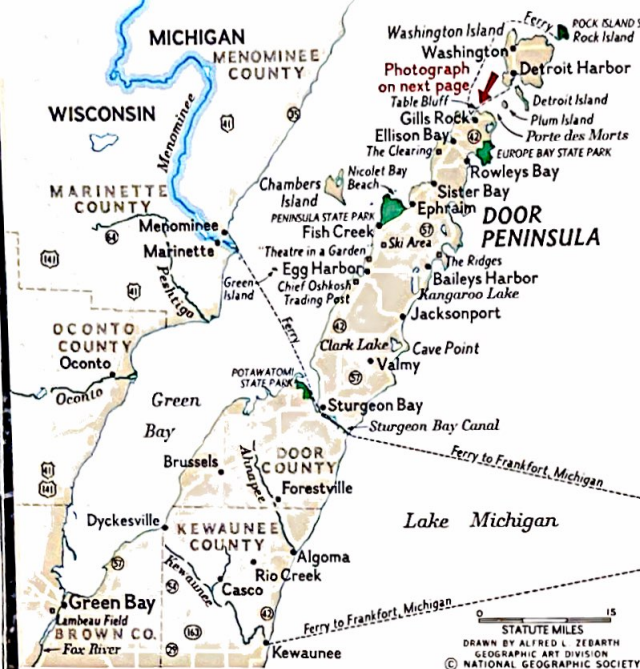
The Door of the Dead washes against the tip of Wisconsin's Door Peninsula (the name comes from that of the strait), a 70-mile-long shoot of land extending from the eastern reaches of the state and bounded by Lake Michigan on the east and Green Bay on the west (maps, next page).

The vista here is one of striking contrasts—of land and water locked together by glaciers that receded thousands of years ago; of an acidlike surf sculpting a cove in rock, while inland, less than 100 yards away, a placid lake nuzzles a beach of white sand; of deer browsing amid wild wood lilies, and gulls in screeching pursuit of a boat, hoping for a hand-out; of harbors throttled by ice, and countryside awash in the pinks and whites of flowering fruit trees (pages 354-5).

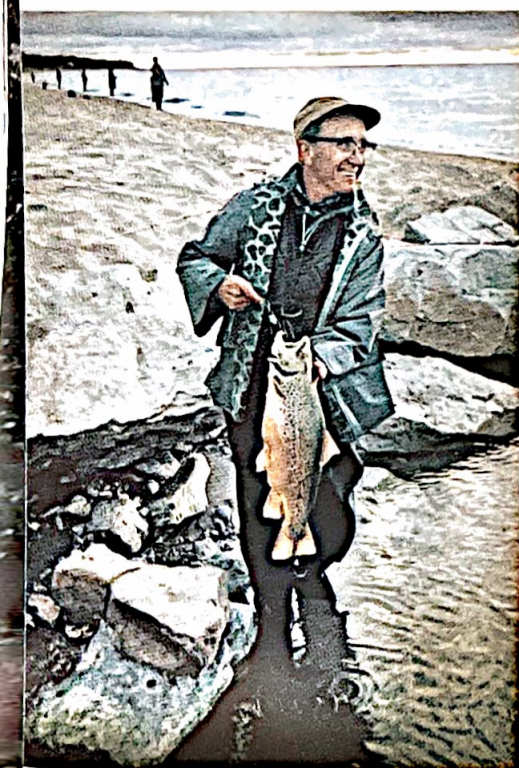
As an alien thumb of land on the corn-knuckled fist of the Middle West, the Door Peninsula, with its 250 miles of shoreline, draws expressions of surprise from first-time visitors. More often than not, the reactions invoke references

Exploding in white fury, waters of Lake Michigan wash

Cave Point on Wisconsin's Door Peninsula. Hikers scale 30-foot limestone bluffs where waves have carved countless arches, caverns, and ledges. With rolling hills and forested headlands—air-conditioned by nature—Door lures thousands fleeing the city's crush and summer's heat.



Scalloped with bays, the whole Door Peninsula shows in a photograph taken six miles up (opposite). Lake Michigan lies at left, Green Bay at right in this southward view above the dread strait French explorers named *Porte des Morts*—Door of the Dead, source of the peninsula's name.



KODACHROMES BY JOSEPH J. SCHERSCHEL (ABOVE) AND EMORY KRISTOF © N.G.S.

Sure cure for fishing fever, a 5½-pound brown trout brings a winner's smile to Green Bay angler Stephen Zacharek.

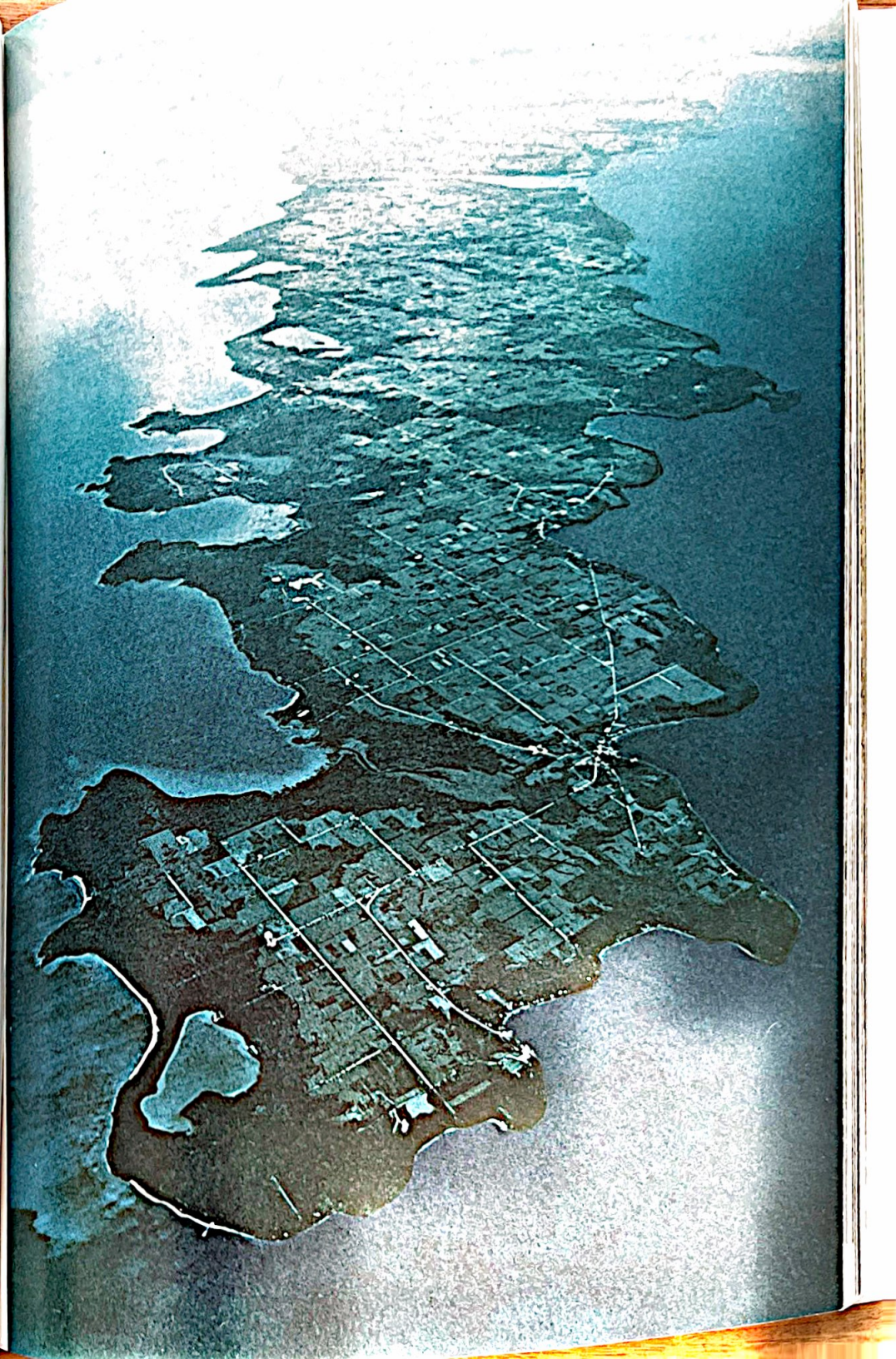
to New England, such as "Cape Cod on an inland sea."

Perhaps the most imaginative reaction of all belonged to Jean Nicolet, the French explorer who visited the peninsula in 1634, before any other white man, probably. Splendidly attired in a mandarin robe of fine damask silk, he stepped ashore, convinced he was in China. Later in that century, Pierre Esprit Radisson, the French trader who kept an extraordinary journal of his fur-seeking expeditions in the Great Lakes region, saw the peninsula and the surrounding islands as "kingdoms...so delicious." He made the observation 300 years ago, but the kingdoms, I found, remain as flavorful as ever.

Town and Country Learn to Get Along

"The wonderful thing about Door County," said Irving Miller, dockmaster at the town of Fish Creek, on the Green Bay side, "is the perfect combination of wilderness and civilization. Each makes its presence known, but neither one crowds the other."

I talked with the 80-year-old dockmaster the morning after the storm, as Fish Creek stirred and shook off the night chill. In days gone by, when the waters all around held lake trout the size of piglets, and sturgeon three times as big, the town thrived as a major fishing center. The lake trout nearly vanished for a while, victims of the repulsive, snakelike sea lampreys, which attached themselves to the trout and sucked their life juices, but recent



control of the predators finds the trout returning now. Not so the sturgeon, the "monster Mishe-Nahma" of Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*; catching one today is a rare experience for peninsula fishermen.

New excitement for anglers is mounting, however. To prey on Lake Michigan's detested alewives, coho salmon from the Pacific have been introduced into area rivers, including the Ahnapee on the peninsula. Fish released in State of Michigan streams in 1966 have already returned upriver once for spawning, and will make another spawning run this fall, promising a bonanza to fishermen.*

Peninsula Wins His Vote Hands Down

On the beach at Fish Creek I found a single dead alewife, rigid and goggle-eyed under an umbrella of flies. Overhead a show-off gull executed an arabesque. And then, as if to match the bird's agility, an elderly man with a tan the color of tea spread a towel on the sand and performed a commendable, if wobbly, handstand.

"Hey, that's pretty good," I said.

"Pretty good for a 68-year-old, anyway," he replied. He was a retired businessman from Highland Park, Illinois, he said, and in only two of the past 24 summers had he failed to spend at least a week on the peninsula.

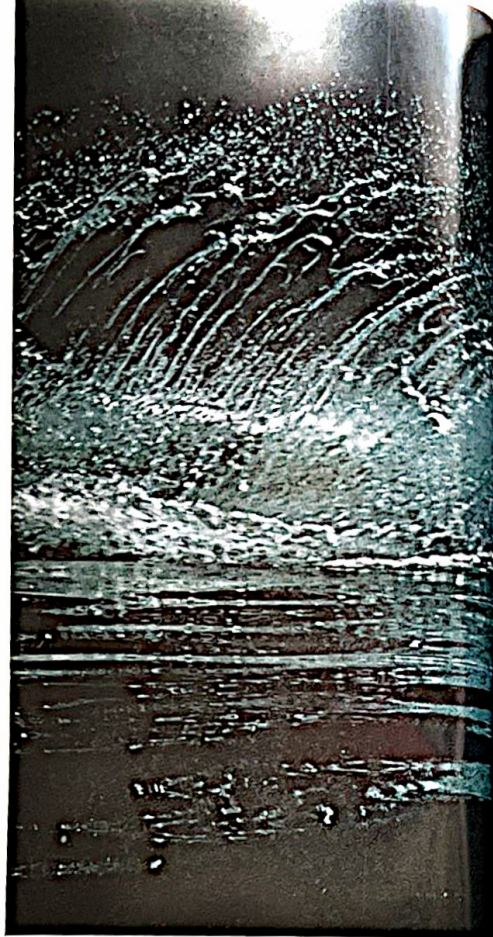
"At home I don't have the energy to scratch an itch, but that changes when I get up here," he added. "Same way with my father. He vacationed on the peninsula for 35 years."

Tourism on the Door Peninsula represents a \$100,000,000 industry. Nothing approaches it in dollar volume—not agriculture, including one of the largest harvests of tart cherries in the Nation, nor shipbuilding, the peninsula's leading industrial enterprise.

A million visitors, most of them from the Middle West and especially the Chicago area, converge on the Door Peninsula each summer. They come back year after year, lured by the scenery and the eminently breathable air.

Equally appealing to me is the endearing fustiness to which the peninsula clings. Dating from the era of spas and the partaking of wondrous mineral waters, this cobwebby link with the past finds hotel guests still summoned to meals by the ringing of a clapper bell. Many of the hotels themselves remain rambling clapboard structures, their verandas freighted with wicker furniture. Amid such surroundings, croquet balls are still smartly dispatched over well-tended lawns.

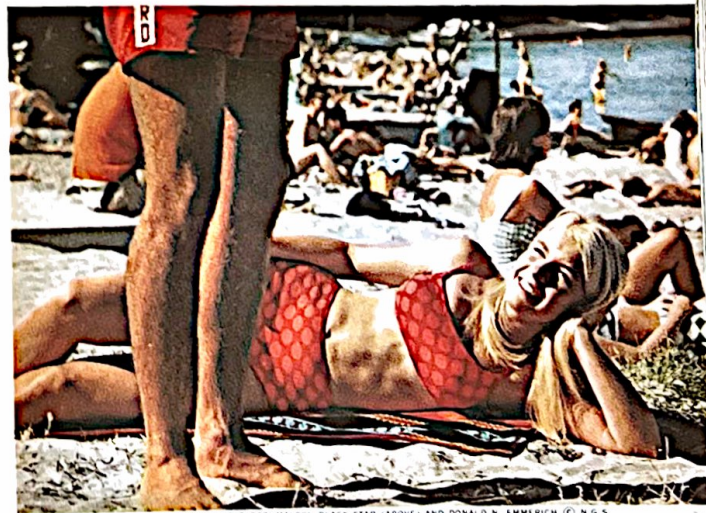
*See "The Incredible Salmon," by Clarence P. Idyll, *GEOGRAPHIC*, August 1968 (page 214).



Jetting fountainlike sprays into the summer sunshine, collegians on holiday furrow the mirror-calm surface of Sister Bay. Here on the shallower Green Bay side of the peninsula, waters are slightly warmer than those of Lake Michigan on the opposite shore.

Toasting to a golden tan, University of Wisconsin student Kathy Berns chats with a lifeguard at Nicolet Bay Beach. Scores of college undergraduates work at Door resorts and recreational facilities during the summer months.

Chinese junk *Sea Breeze*, built in Hong Kong, has sailed Door waters for almost six years with owners Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Vallez of Highland Park, Illinois. The peninsula's 250-mile shoreline, with its many secluded coves, is a yachtsman's paradise. On summer weekends racing sails, brimming with the wind, swirl a cavalcade of color across the swells.



RODACHROMES BY TED ROZUMALSKI, BLACK STAR (ABOVE) AND DONALD N. EMMERICH © N.G.S.

For the average long-time summer visitor to the peninsula, vacation time is given over to a lot of leisure, a little culture, and the renewing of summer friendships. At least one evening is set aside for attending Wisconsin's oldest professional summer theater, the Peninsula Players' "Theatre in a Garden" near Fish Creek. Another evening finds the summer people at one of the nine concerts that make up the annual Peninsula Music Festival, held in the town of Fish Creek itself.

Otherwise, dinner is followed by the dabbing of citronella on arms and neck and a walk along the nearest beach.

"Such vacations were once commonplace, but now you might say they're almost unique," observed the owner of one of the resort hotels.

In any case, the overriding presence of things maritime is the major element in the uniqueness of the peninsula. Walking along Fish Creek's municipal dock, I counted dozens of boats, all feeding squiggling Silly Putty reflections to the clear water. They ranged from a luxurious teakwood-decked cabin cruiser to an authentic Chinese junk (page 350). On the latter, a sign announced:

BUILT IN 1959 BY THE SAU KEE SHIPYARD
IN APLICHAU, HONG KONG. FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION CALL HONG KONG 90029.

"I suppose people bother you with a lot of questions about the junk," I remarked to the woman on deck.

"Well, now and then someone stops and asks whether his shirts are ready," Mrs. Jerry Vallez replied, smiling. "Also, people see the Chinese characters on the stern and want to know what the junk is called. We've been told that the best translation is *Little Sea Wind*, but we call her *Sea Breeze*." Mrs. Vallez and her artist husband, summer residents for 10 years, do not know how *Sea Breeze* got from Hong Kong to a marina in Illinois, where they first saw it wearing a for-sale sign nearly six years ago.

The peninsula's nautical character begins to exert itself at the city of Sturgeon Bay, where a canal cleaves through Door's mid-section, leaving a dual-lane drawbridge as the only access to the northern half. Crossing

the bridge, I saw a proud-masted schooner, riding at anchor like an elegant crest on the water-sheathed dagger of land. Later I met owner Fred J. Peterson, chairman of a Sturgeon Bay shipbuilding firm (page 362), and he invited me to join the crew when the 65-foot staysail schooner *Utopia* took part in a race to Green Island, 16 miles out in the bay.

Schooner Has Known Far Landfalls

Flying most of her 2,500 square feet of sail, *Utopia* moved downwind through the open drawbridge. Smaller sailboats, flaunting their speed and maneuverability, skittered around us like children taunting the village oaf.

But when the breeze yeasted into a strong wind, many of the other boats fell behind while their crews worked to corral battered sails. "Class will tell now," one of our crewmen yelled as *Utopia* took the wind and ran.

Still, others crossed the finish line ahead of us. I suggested to Mr. Peterson that his steel-hulled schooner is better suited to the ocean.

"No question about it," he agreed, recalling a memorable voyage that began in 1956.

In that year, Fred Peterson, then 62 years old, hoisted anchor in Sturgeon Bay and sailed *Utopia* down the Mississippi River and across three oceans and 10 seas. With pickup crewmen ("was it the Tongan or the Marquesan who chewed kava root while hoisting sail?"), the vessel circled the globe, returning to Sturgeon Bay in 1959.

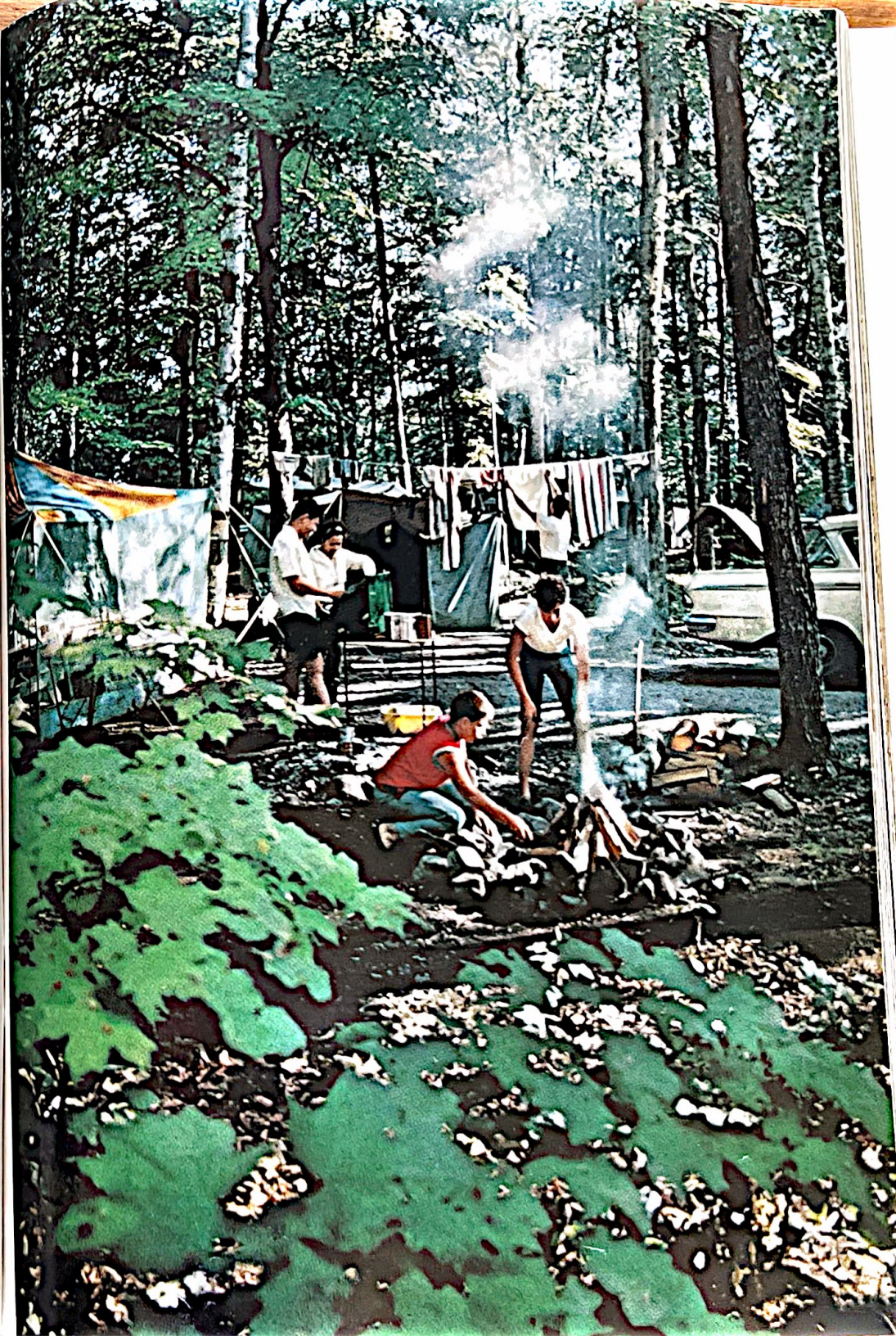
Moving *Utopia* back to her berth after the race, we passed docks crowded with the hulks of tankers and freighters gone to scrap after many journeys on distant seas. A Coast Guard cutter, somber and Spartan in coiled-line orderliness, backed away from its pier and hurried off toward the other side of the bay. A fleet of prams put out from a yacht basin, their colorful sails beating in the breeze like the wings of monarch butterflies; boys and girls no older than 15 handled the tillers.

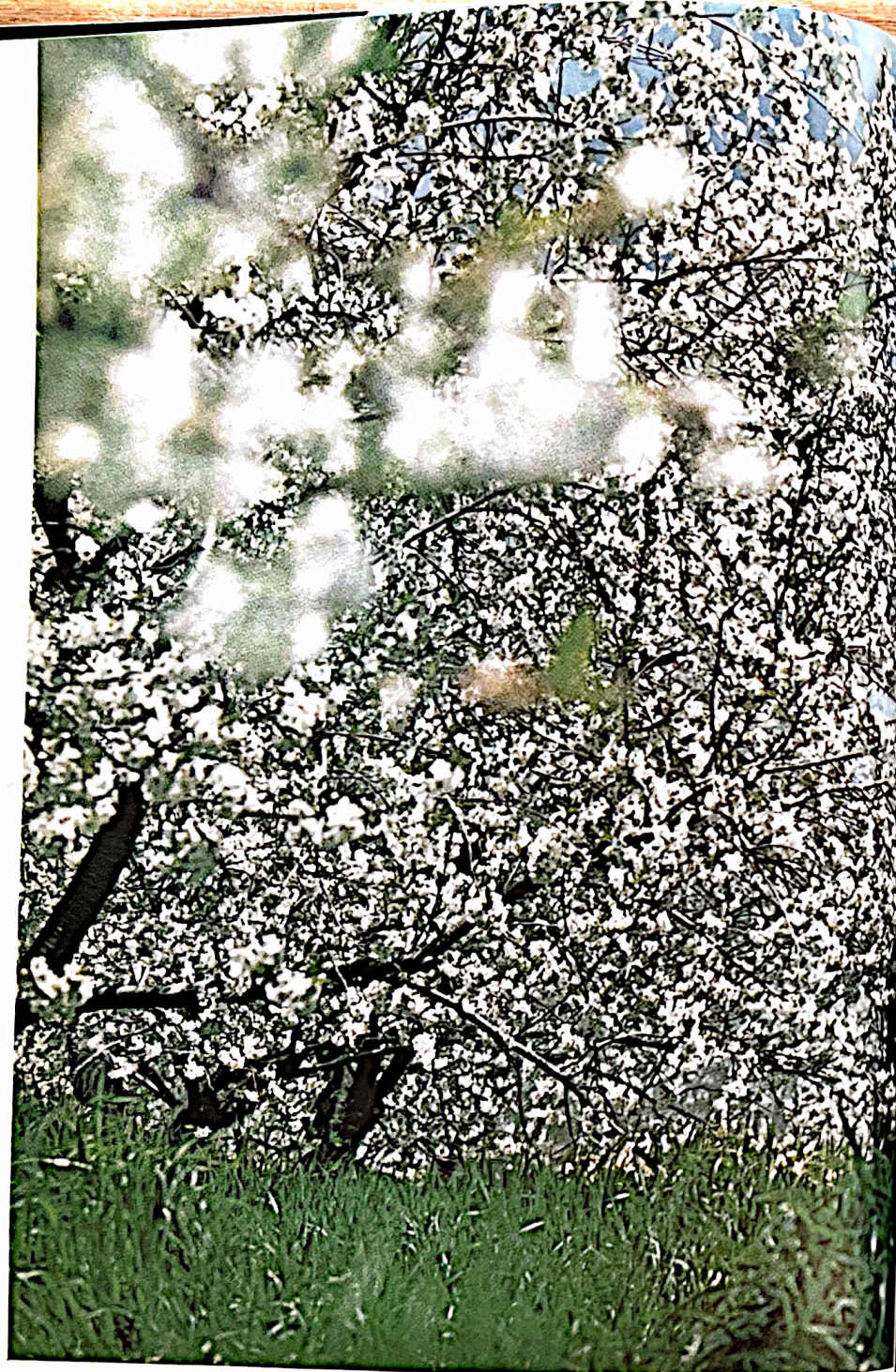
Vessels under sail have plied Door Peninsula waters for almost three hundred years. Many went down there, taking their cargoes with them; as a result, scuba diving holds wide popularity as a vacation-time activity on

(Continued on page 357)

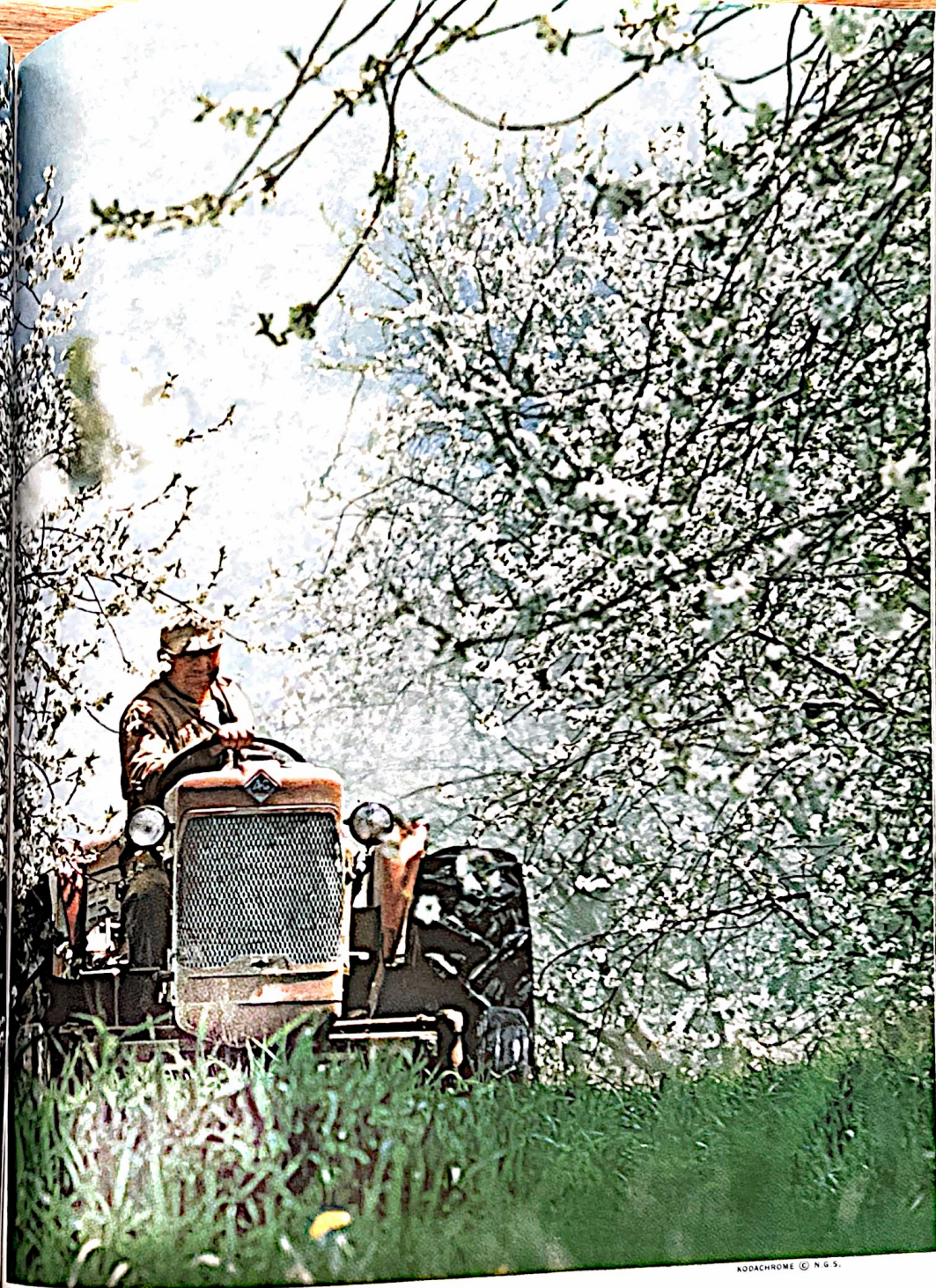
Elixir for exhausted urbanites: Stretching up toward the sun, birches and maples shade campers in Peninsula State Park and give a home to purple finches, scarlet tanagers, and indigo buntings. On a nearby bluff overlooking Eagle Harbor, a superbly manicured 18-hole golf course challenges even the experts. Established in 1909, the 3,767-acre park enshrines the site of first settler Increase Claflin's homestead.

KODACHROME BY TED ROZUMALSKI, BLACK STAR © N.G.S.





Blizzard of blossoms whitens Door country when buds burst across 6,000 acres of cherry trees. Riding between the lacy drifts, an orchard worker sprays them with a fungicide to kill leaf spot. Canneries on the peninsula process 90



percent of the crop, mostly the tart Montmorency so flavorful in pies and cobbles. Only a week or two after these petals flutter to earth, Door's half-dozen varieties of apple trees bloom and brighten the spring scene anew.

KODACHROME © N.G.S.

the peninsula. Of course, the booty includes few, if any, ducats, doubloons, or princely gems, for the ships that sailed the Great Lakes in the 19th century carried mostly lumber and grain and iron ore.

"We want to encourage the preservation of wrecks and stop them from sometimes being used as firewood, literally burned up." As he talked, Gene Shastal of Lake Villa, Illinois, ran his fingers over a coffee table made from the rudder of a schooner that sank in Green Bay about a hundred years ago. Other pieces from other sunken ships filled the living room of his lodge atop a high bluff near the tip of the peninsula.

Shastal and a group of Midwest divers have begun assembling the histories of the more than 200 charted shipwrecks in the area. Whenever they can get away from their jobs, they hurry to the peninsula, pull on wetsuits, and disappear under a frenzy of bubbles. I went along as an observer on two of the dives, one of them in the dead of winter with the temperature at five degrees above zero.

Our station wagon moved slowly over the 18-inch-thick covering of ice on a small bay off the northwest corner of the peninsula. An advance man on foot inspected the ice for weak sections through which the vehicle might plunge to what our driver laughingly (nothing uproarious, understand) referred to as "the ultimate in fluid drive."

"This is the spot," said Jack Michel, a scuba-

diving instructor from Lake Villa, Illinois, and we came to a stop a hundred yards from shore. "We'll need a chain saw to get a hole in this ice."

The chain bit into the ice with authority, but progress was slow. The cold grew more punishing, and I soon joined the others in a spirited little dance to stomp the numbness from our feet. In an hour the opening was carved. Michel and the other divers slid into the ice water and trailed down about twenty feet to the remains of the schooner *Fleetwing*.

Simple Relics Evoke America's Past

Driven hard ashore in 1888, *Fleetwing* broke up and sank. She carried a cargo of lumber, including hundreds of white elm barrel staves. Jack Michel brought up one of the marble-smooth staves, and before the dive ended, at least half a dozen others lay in a pile on the ice. Certainly divers often receive more generous rewards for exploring sunken ships, but the treasure seldom comes invested with the tenor of 19th-century America. More than just parts of a barrel, the staves framed for me a mind's-eye picture of a lumber industry thriving on the demands of a nation in a hurry to grow.

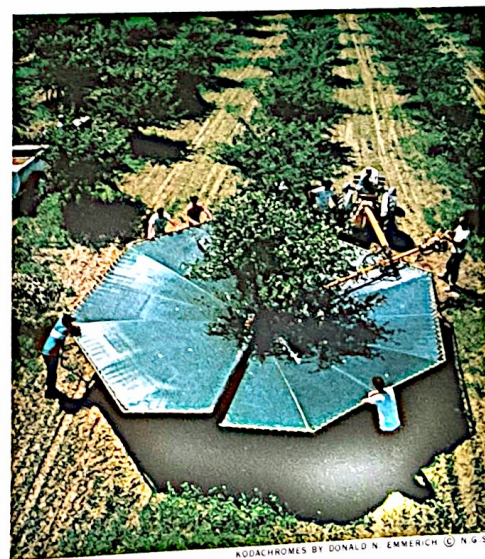
The bones of Robert de la Salle's famous bark, *Le Griffon*, may lie off the Door Peninsula. In 1679 the ship arrived in Green Bay waters, the first sailing vessel on the Great Lakes above Niagara. With a cargo of

Red rain of summer

IN DAYS PAST, Door cherry pickers, pails in hand, climbed trees and teetered precariously on ladders or limbs. In today's mechanized world, motor-driven metal arms have largely taken over the job, shaking the ripe fruit onto twin canvas aprons (right).

Normally the peninsula's crop runs about 20 million pounds, but during the past two years late-spring cold spells have held the harvest to 11 million pounds. Fortunately, good market prices enabled growers to earn almost as much as in big-crop years.

Killing spring frosts and the threat of disease—trees must be sprayed five times annually—combine to make cherry growing a risky financial venture. One orchard owner insists that he never needs "to go to Las Vegas to gamble."



KODACHROMES BY DONALD N. ENMERCH © 1983



beaver skins and possibly some gold, *Le Griffon* disappeared on its return voyage. One tradition holds that it sank, another that Indians burned it. What actually happened remains a mystery.

Perhaps the ship went to the bottom of the *Porte des Morts* because of a navigational error, easily brought on in the strait by whip-like winds and currents running counter to each other. The currents, as I witnessed, are strong enough to undermine and wash away two feet of solid ice on the waters in just 14 hours. During a single autumn storm in 1880, the ships wrecked in the passage and along the peninsula numbered in the dozens.

Here too a large canoe party of Winnebago Indians fell victim to winds and currents on a fateful day in the early 1800's. According to one story, 500 perished en route to do battle in one of the many intertribal wars that flared on the Door Peninsula: Illinois tribesmen fought Winnebagoes, Winnebagoes fought Potawatomis, and the far-ranging Iroquois fought everyone. Even now the ground remains hummocked with the burial mounds of braves, and plowed fields continue to yield arrowheads and, now and then, a limestone war club.

Chief Still Dons a War Bonnet

And yet, no tacky commercialism centered on packaged Indian lore afflicts the peninsula. "Of course, we have Roy Oshkosh and his trading post," said one of the hundreds of college girls who work as waitresses in the hotels. "But he's authentic, a bona fide chief."

Roy Oshkosh, titular head of the Menominee tribe, often dons a war bonnet, but only for the benefit of the summer people who crowd into his amphitheater near Egg Harbor on summer evenings for a campfire-crackling, drum-thumping, peace-pipe-smoking, evil-spirits-chasing powwow. Indian dances performed by boys and young men, schooled in the art by the chief for years, highlight the show.

Those who speak Menominee know the 70-year-old chief as Tshekatchakemau—the Old King. He is a graduate of Carlisle in Pennsylvania, a school founded especially for the higher education of Indians, but even that

had not quite equipped him to deal with the complexities of a Medicare form. When I called on him, he laid the troublesome paper aside and told me that he is the great-grandson of Oshkosh the Brave, the famous Menominee for whom the city in Wisconsin is named.

"As a boy," Chief Oshkosh continued, "my father took me to visit an aunt on the reservation. She told me about a place on the Door Peninsula where our people gathered long



"Throwing a pot," Abraham Cohn shapes wet clay into a pitcher in his Fish Creek studio, the Potter's Wheel. After firing the vessel, he will glaze it and return it to the kiln for a second baking at 2,350° F.

Bounty from a graveyard of ships—the Door of the Dead—lures adventurous scuba divers to the peninsula. This new chalet lodge, On the Rocks, caters to the underwater explorers. Prize possession of owner Gene Shastal, left, and manager Bob Lapp is this half-ton windlass, believed to be from the schooner *Fleetwing*, which sank during a storm in 1888. Kedge anchor leaning against the windlass is a 285-pound relic recovered from 40-foot depths near Plum Island.

ago—a beautiful wooded site with a stream running through it. I looked all over the peninsula, and when I reached this spot, I knew I had found the place. I bought it."

Here the chief and his wife live the year round, although the Menominee reservation is about 60 miles to the west. "If something important comes up on the reservation, they send someone up here and we talk it over," he explained, "or I go there if necessary."

Because Roy Oshkosh has no sons, hereditary rule of the Menominee tribe ends with him. As we discussed this, he told me that the second son, rather than the eldest, always inherits the role of chief. When I asked him why, he replied, "You've got me." And then he crushed out his cigarette, picked up his peace pipe, and went outside to raise the curtain on another powwow.

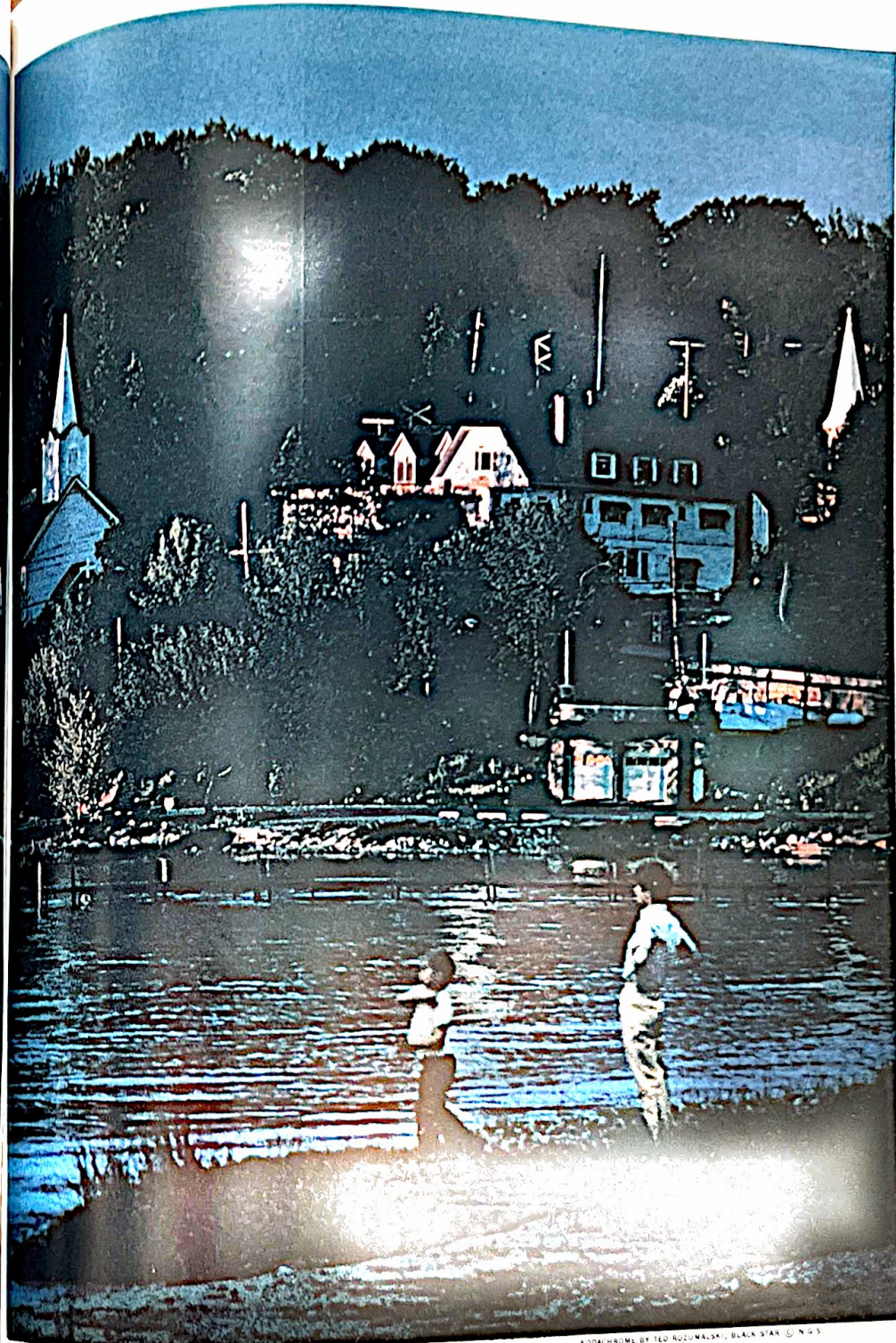
Icelanders Find a Shangri-La

Indians of many tribes chose to live in the Door Peninsula region because of the great quantity and variety of food available. For the same reason, the first Icelanders to settle as a group in the United States came to Washington Island, the crown of the peninsula severed from the mainland by the Door of the Dead. As fishermen, they looked out their front doors on some of the richest waters in all the Great Lakes. Records of catches made about that time reveal that in 1862 a 14-year-old boy pulled in seven lake trout, of which the smallest weighed 40 pounds.

Little wonder then that Pierre Radisson, again writing in the journal that inspired others to explore the western wilderness, described Washington Island and nearby coasts as places where "whatever a man could desire was to be had in great plenty; viz. staggs, fishes in abundance, and all sorts of meat, corne enough."

Of the 500 permanent residents on Washington Island now, about 100 are descendants of settlers who came from Iceland in the latter half of the 19th century. Most of them retain only memories of the customs and language

Day fades into night at the village of Ephraim, whose Biblical name means "doubly fruitful." Moravians in 1853 founded the settlement. Tucked into a hillside above Eagle Harbor, it still retains an Old World charm. Gabled Anderson Hotel, nestling between the steeped Lutheran and Moravian churches, typifies the many rambling, verandaed inns that welcome the same visitors back summer after summer.





U. S. Navy minesweeper takes shape in the Sturgeon Bay shipyards of Peterson Builders, Inc. Fred J. Peterson, left, chairman of the board, and his son Robert, executive vice president, check plans for installing fiber-glass fuel and water tanks in the all-wood, non-magnetic hull. Assembled and fitted by the 500 workers in the Peterson yard—the peninsula's largest single employer—the ship required 15 months to complete at a cost of almost \$2,000,000.

On a blustery May day, commercial fishermen net whitefish near Ellison Bay. The ship's mascot appears to be counting the catch. Besides whitefish, waters of Lake Michigan yield trout, perch, northern pike, walleyes, and coho salmon.

of the mother country of their parents and grandparents.

One of the few descendants of Icelanders who can converse in Icelandic is Magnus Magnusson. Born on Washington Island in 1888, the year the *Fleetwing* took its cargo of barrel staves to the bottom, Magnusson served as island postmaster for 34 years.

In addition to the Magnussons, there were the Gudmundsens, Gunnlaugssons, Bjarnarsons, and others. Norwegians and Danes and Swedes came too, but most of them took up homesteads on the mainland. The Icelanders, however, maintained their colony on Washington Island; there they farmed a little, fished a lot, and tried to understand the indifference of their American-born sons to preservation of Icelandic ways.

Magnus Magnusson now oversees a small museum near the northwestern tip of the island, where the waters of Lake Michigan explode against the base of a 150-foot-high bluff. The items on display there, such as a 100-year-old meat chopper brought over from Denmark, hold little value—except to a man seeking to tighten the ties with his European heritage.

Washington Island and much of the upper peninsula are turning to this heritage for reasons not completely divorced from commercial considerations. The Scandinavian Festival held on the island each August has

the ferries tooting over from the mainland every hour, each time with a capacity load of tourists. Teen-agers in Scandinavian dress dance in the streets to folk music, acknowledging, for the duration of the celebration at least, that it's fun to be square. Restaurants feature smorgasbord—heapings of open-faced sandwiches, shrimps encased in shimmering jellied molds, and delicate little cakes, each packing a sugared richness that probably had something to do with the fearful girth of the old Viking warriors.

Babies Receive a Ringing Welcome

Many of the island's permanent residents shun such festival fare. "The men on the island outlive the women because they keep active and follow a low-fat diet," said Dr. Paul Rutledge, the island's only physician.

Dr. Rutledge first came to Washington Island in 1935 as a summer visitor. He became a permanent resident in 1960. "I've delivered 42 babies on the island and have a picture of each one under the glass on my desk," he told me, his voice touched with pride. "Once I attended a very difficult delivery, and when it ended successfully I was so happy that I went next door to the Lutheran Church and rang the bell. That became a tradition; whenever I deliver a baby, I ring the church bell."

Just north of Washington Island sits a brooding 912-acre outcropping of untrampled



Fresh from the soil, potatoes ride a conveyor to trucks on Washington Island. At Detroit Harbor the 200,000-bushel crop goes aboard two former ferryboats used in the Straits of Mackinac in pre-bridge days. Now towed as barges, the vessels move the crop to markets in Illinois and Michigan.

"North of the Tension Line," boasts Washington Island in its quest for summer visitors, who relax in a setting devoid of "great glamor, swank shoppes, and night life." The appeal pays dividends: Tourism outstrips potatoes, the island's other major industry.



KODACHROMES BY DONALD N. EMMERICH (BELOW) AND TED ROZUMALSKI, BLACK STAR © N.G.S.

Shaggy Icelandic ponies lend an appropriate look to Washington Island; Icelanders settled here in the 19th century, and today their descendants number about 100. Adele Rich-ter feeds hay to her riding ponies, five of the 30-odd on the island.

Each August Washington's 500 year-round residents celebrate their heritage with a Scandinavian Festival that lasts two days and features a bountiful smorgasbord.

A succession of Indian tribes lived on Washington before the white man came. The island takes its name from a schooner that anchored briefly in 1816.

wilderness that once served as the private domain of Chester H. Thordarson, an immigrant from Iceland who made a fortune by inventing electrical devices and appliances.

Rock Island reminded Thordarson of his native land. To match its wild grandeur, he had constructed on the beach a massive stone combination boathouse-great hall with noble arched windows and a fireplace large enough to play ping-pong in. Here he kept his extensive collection of Icelandic literature; below, cliff swallows nested on the cavernous walls of the boathouse.

Thordarson died in 1945, and the island eventually became a state park. Except for the great hall, now under the care of a park manager, and the few other markings of the man who missed his native Iceland, Rock Island remains a preserve of woods and silver beaches which, in truth, only the gulls and deer can inhabit with grace.

I went next to Chambers Island, in Green Bay waters, where George J. Baudhuin, a Sturgeon Bay businessman and the person most closely associated with the island, waited to show me around.

A financial giant from Chicago purchased property on the island, Baudhuin told me, and began developing it into a lavish private playground. But the work stopped during the depression of the 1930's.

"There, see that rise in the ground?" he exclaimed as we bounced over a rutted road in his four-wheel-drive vehicle. "That's part of the old golf course. And that level stretch of ground with the stunted grass growth—the remains of a private airstrip."

Nearly 20 years ago, George Baudhuin and his four brothers purchased a large cottage on the island and turned it over to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Green Bay for use as a retreat house. It fronts on a 380-acre lake within the island, and within the lake itself are two islands. A heavy silence pushes down on this kaleidoscope of wilderness and water except when the sisters go boating. When that happens, visitors to the island can sometimes hear, as I heard early one morning, a soft voice skipping over the cellophane-like surface of the lake, imploring divine assistance in getting a balky outboard motor to kick over.

"Where Man Can Go . . . to Clear His Mind"

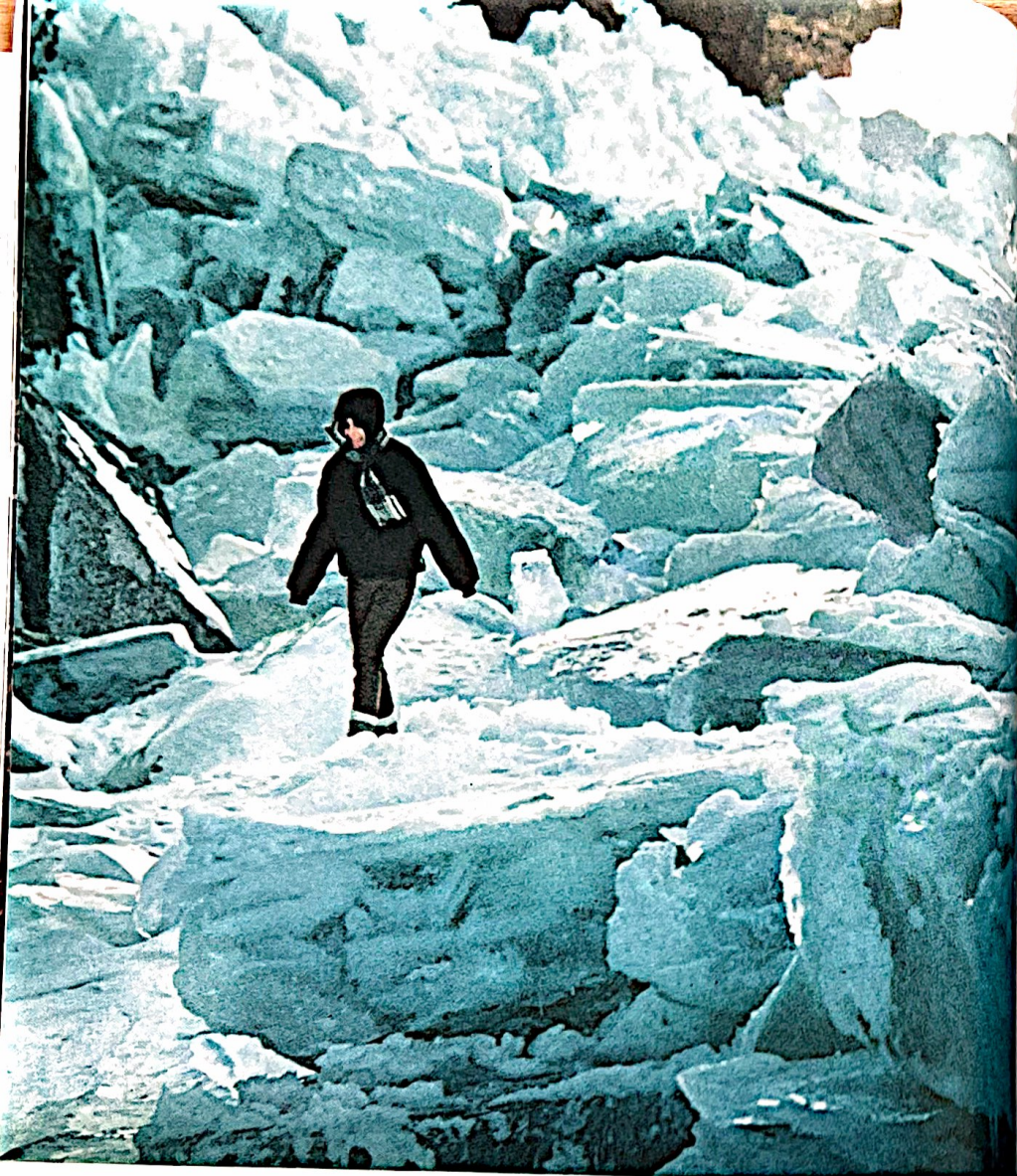
Of all the men who found a setting for their dreams on the Door Peninsula, one met quiet but complete success. Jens Jensen, a renowned landscape architect from Illinois, sought not a private domain or playground, but, simply, a place "where man can go to breathe and to feel his kinship with the earth, to have a chance to clear his mind and to take soundings of where he is going."

He found it at the village of Ellison Bay, on the Green Bay side of the upper peninsula, where centuries-old cedars and withered pines stand rooted in limestone bluffs.

Establishing 128 acres of the heavily wooded site as a retreat for study and contemplation, and calling it The Clearing, Jensen invited everyone to share with him "the strength and understanding that is found close to the roots of living things."

Jens Jensen died in 1951, but The Clearing, now under





Twenty-foot-high windrows of jagged ice pile against Table Bluff at the tip of the Door thumb. Occasionally the channel has frozen so solid

the administration of the Wisconsin Farm Bureau, continues to function as he intended it to. Week-long seminars on art, music, literature, philosophy, and other subjects attract participants from many states during the summer. The presence of five dormitories, a library, and a main lodge fail to detract from the primeval flavor of the setting.

On another day I walked through a living showcase of plant life that spans a range of

ecology all the way from that of the Ice Age to that of the present. The acid bogs of the subarctic, the vegetation of the tundra, the wintergreen sharpness and rubberlike resiliency of the Canadian carpet—I found them all at the Nation's largest corporately owned wild-flower reserve, an 800-acre sanctuary called The Ridges (maps, page 348).

Located on the Lake Michigan side of the peninsula, near the town of Baileys Harbor,



KODACHROME BY TED ROZUMALSKI, BLACK STAR © N.G.S.

that cars could drive from Gills Rock to Washington Island, but ice-breaking ferries with powerful engines usually are able to run all winter.

the ridges that give the park its name mark former shorelines built of glacial sands deposited more than 10,000 years ago. A succession of ridges interwoven with lacings of water and cedar swamps runs through the sanctuary. The forest is there, and so is the sand dune.

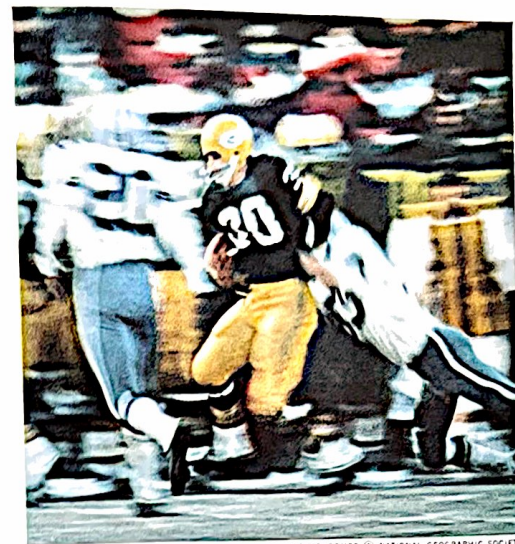
More than anything else, though, The Ridges means wild flowers—rare, exquisite blushes of color on a canvas that stretches to the shore

of the lake itself. The inventory includes more than 25 species of orchids.

The Door Peninsula of cliffs and coves and wild orchids and virgin forest lies north of Sturgeon Bay. A few miles south, the thumb becomes rolling farmland. And just about between the two, where both the moo of the cow and the mew of the gull can be heard, a group of 35 or 40 visitors gathers most every summer Sunday evening for a fish boil.



Thirteen below zero read the thermometer on December 31, 1967, when the Green Bay Packers kicked off to the Dallas Cowboys at Green Bay's the Lambeau Field. First title game ever played in subzero weather, the contest decided the championship of the National Football League. Fifty thousand fans, bundled in parkas and masked in wool (left), roared their happiness when the injury-riddled Packers, sparked by second-string fullback Chuck Mercein (No. 30 at right), scored a last-minute 21-to-17 victory. Then, amidst a cloud of icy breath, the goal posts toppled (below). Two weeks later some 10,000 Pack-er rooters thawed out in Miami, Florida, while cheering their team to a win over Oakland in the Super Bowl. Green Bay justifiably acclaimed itself "Tittletown, U.S.A."



KODACHROMES © NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY



This outdoor culinary exercise, indigenous to the Door Peninsula, originated more than a hundred years ago when men in lumber camps required great quantities of food in a hurry. The precise, carefully timed operation is more like a track meet than a cook-out.

"Time!" Jim Larsen shouted after consulting his stopwatch. Ted Anderson nodded and dumped 30 pounds of potatoes and seven pounds of salt into a pail of boiling water.

Anderson, a schoolteacher from Chicago, had invited me to one of the regular fish boils held at his summer place near Sturgeon Bay. Jim Larsen, the "boil master," was in charge.

At the end of 20 minutes, 30 pounds of filleted lake trout wrapped in cheesecloth went in. "The fish must stay in 17 minutes, no more, no less," Larsen said. "Otherwise, it will not be cooked properly."

Anderson threw fuel oil on the fire three times, causing the water to boil over and carry off the excess fish oil. What remained with the potatoes were mounds of sweet trout, brought to the peak of tenderness in exactly 17 minutes. No more, no less.

Winter-sports Fans Find the Door

After most of the guests departed, Mrs. Anderson stood by the water's edge and told me, "Our whole family looks forward to coming up here each summer. We manage to sneak away at Christmas and come up then too. I think I am as fond of the peninsula in the winter as I am in the summer."

More and more winter-sports enthusiasts from the Middle West share the sentiment.

After the snow comes, carloads of skiers crowd the one road leading to the seven slopes on the high hill near Fish Creek.

"The Door Peninsula is catching on as a winter vacation area," said Harold Larson, owner of the 120-acre skiing facility. "We get more people here every year." Harold and I sat in the warm glass-fronted lodge at the foot of the hill. A group of skiers, and some who only talk about skiing, gathered around the fireplace to autograph leg casts and recall past and memorable schussings.

At Potawatomi and Peninsula State Parks, both on the Green Bay shore, the buzz of snowmobiles racing through the woods smoothers the screams of exhilaration trailing down the toboggan runs. And at the village of Ephraim, William Sohns raises the loudest noise of all with his homemade air iceboat.

"Stand back, now!" he yelled, snapping the

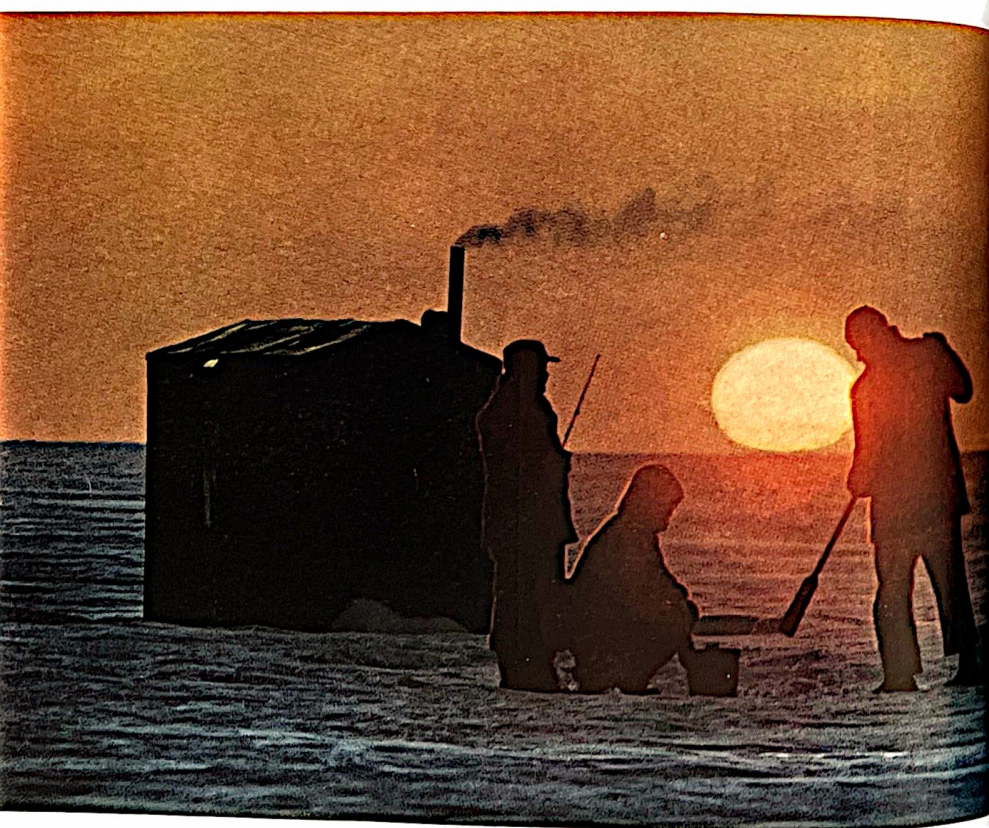
propeller downward. The 65-horsepower airplane engine on the rear of the ski-fitted boat coughed into a rumble. I climbed into the cabin of the craft just in time to hear Sohns say, "I've had her up to 70 miles an hour, but I think I'll open her up today."

When he looked closer at the frozen expanse of Green Bay before us, he added: "The ice looks pretty rough. Tell you what, come back on a nicer day, and we'll give her a whirl." A nicer day never came during my visit, and I like to think my parting expressions of heart-felt disappointment sounded sincere.

Hardest Fishermen Take to the Ice

Of all the winter-sports activities on the peninsula, none demands more dedication than ice fishing (below). As soon as the ice thickens and toughens, the colorful fishing shacks, smoke curling up from their warm innards,

Hardy is hardly the word for these ice fishermen, who hack a hole in the 32-inch armor plate of Sturgeon Bay while the temperature hovers around -9° F. Most fishermen make holes in the floors of heated huts, where they can pull up perch and trout in greater comfort. Snowmobiler at right ventures



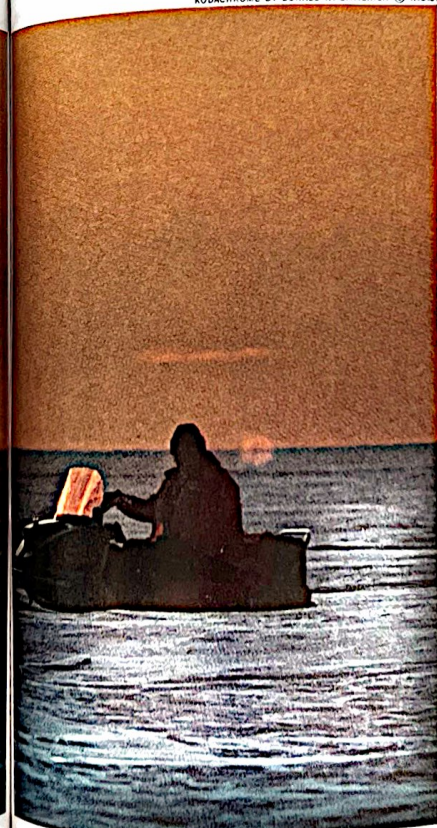
appear on Green Bay; there the hardest of all fishermen encamp for hours in quest of the bay's tasty perch. Some, like Clarence Chaudoir, a retired Coast Guardsman who lives in Sturgeon Bay, fish out in the open.

I slipped and slid for what seemed like 15 minutes before covering the 100 yards between the shore and parka-swathed Chaudoir. The temperature hung around zero. "I guess I've fished out here on the ice every winter for the past 20 years," he said. "Not much luck today; only caught nine all morning."

I glanced at my watch: shortly after one o'clock in the afternoon, and with the wind acting as if it had lunched on frosted steel. I marveled at Chaudoir's ability to tolerate the terrible cold. I marveled even more when he told me he intended to stay out another three or four hours because "sometimes they bite good in the late afternoon."

out from shore to pay a call. Many of Door's growing legion of winter-sports enthusiasts wear buttons that read "Stamp Out Summer."

KODACHROME BY DONALD N. EWERICH © N.G.S.



Winters on the Door Peninsula are not kind, although the surrounding waters act as a moderating influence on the temperature, raising it a few degrees above that in the city of Green Bay on many winter days. Not that the people of Green Bay concern themselves much with the freeze that grips their city each year, for they wrap themselves up in the fortunes of their beloved Packers, 11 times world champions in professional football (pages 368-9).

True Packer Fan Never Despairs

When the Packers do battle at home, Sunday in "Tittletown" starts with a whoop and ends with a holler. Some churches schedule services early so that members of their congregations can get to Lambeau Field in time for the kickoff. Admission to the 50,861-seat stadium is by season pass only, and so highly prized is a pass that divorce actions sometimes bog down when neither party agrees to let the other have it—the car, yes; even the house and dog; but not the season ticket.

"I heard the story told—not that I believe it, mind you—that a fellow in Green Bay lost a \$5 wager when Minnesota beat the Packers one year," a shipyard worker in Sturgeon Bay told me. "He refused to believe the outcome, so when they replayed the game on TV the next day, he backed the Packers again and lost another \$30."

But home games with the Bears of Chicago, a city more than 40 times the size of Green Bay, bring out the ultimate in partisanship. Each Packer gain draws from the crowd a great roar, a collective rising to the feet, a shaking of fists in a gesture of belligerent bliss. When the Bears score, the moan is like a concerto for a thousand bassoons.

This lionhearted devotion spills over into the Door Peninsula, where in the town of Sister Bay, a man told me he will always remember December 7, 1941, because on that day the Packers beat the Bears, 16 to 14.

Football seasons end, but winters linger on in the area until one day, usually in mid-April, residents of the peninsula wake up to find a warming sun scraping the flour paste from the winter sky. Soon the cherry trees blossom, the wild flowers weave their carpets on the woodland floors, and hotel people start recruiting help for the coming season.

About this time too, the spray from the ice-free surf of Lake Michigan hangs a necklace of small, pale rainbows over the shore as if to reaffirm the vows between this rocky land and the inland sea.

THE END