

## **SERIOUS OR JUST HAVING FUN? HARD TO TELL WITH SPINNING**

**2/13/96**

“An unforgettable character” was the way Ted Smith described Lee Spinning. Ted is a longtime friend and fishing and hunting buddy of Lee’s and is a wildlife biologist in the Watertown DEC office.

Although he did not live or work in the Adirondacks, I consider Lee and Adirondack man. His heart and mind were always at Woodhull Lake at his beloved “Birches”. The Birches is the two story log camp built by his father, Harry, in 1895. The Birches and Woodhull Lake were the focal point of his life and he spent as much time as possible there.

Lee’s father, Harry, was a contractor and guide in the Woodhull area and was the builder of many camps on both First Bisby and Woodhull. He had a lifelong association with the League Club and his first summer job was as boat boy at Bisby Lodge. Until the early 60s, travel to and from many of the camps on Bisby was by guide boat. The boat boy met each boat and held it steady while the passengers disembarked. The boat was then stored in the boathouse and the process was reversed for the return trip.

He worked for the Woods Camp at Bisby as guide and caretaker. The family remembers the era with many fond memories of the good times they shared.

Lee had a great sense of humor and loved to ply it on everyone he met. When I was manager at the Bisby Lodge, he would stop by to say hello and play a game of tennis with my daughter, Nancy, on his way over to camp.

He told Nancy he once warmed up Bill Tilden while he was a guest at the Club before a match. She, of course, did not have a clue as to who Bill Tilden was – and I suspect that many of you reading this won’t either.

Lee was always a controversial figure partly because you never knew when to take him seriously.

An avid sportsman, he was a loyal supporter of most state fish and game programs at a time when many of them were unpopular with sportsmen in general. His dedication to his beliefs earned him many friends among the professional game managers and biologists within the Conservation Department. His retort to an irate participant at an

annual deer forum who was berating the state representative for not doing more to stop coyote predation of deer was typical. He asked the guy if he was Little Red Riding Hood!

I knew the man for a good many years and never was able to figure out if he was serious or just trying to wind me up. He loved to park on the Bisby bridge and delay one and all with good natured banter allowing them to pass only after a swig of Mich-Gum brew – a horrible concoction of several liquors in a disgusting looking old bottle with a homemade label on it. You soon learned to take a swig, bad as it was, to get away.

One thing Lee was serious about though was his love of nature and Woodhull Lake. He was a very sentimental man with a passion for tradition.

To make a long story short, he was a hard person to get to know, but after you did, it was worth it.