

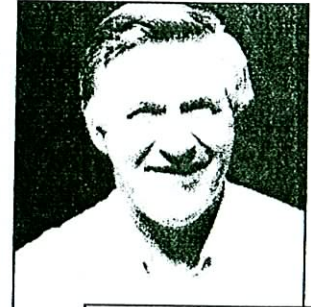
Tales & Treasures Of Harborcreek Township

“DUE NORTH”

At 8 a. m. on a cold Saturday morning in March of 1963, Gene Heuser left his warm home on East Lake Road and headed **due north**. When he reached the shore of Lake Erie, the only thing ahead of him was an icy barren wasteland as far as the eye could see. His plan was to hike over the ice, about 32 miles, to the Canadian lighthouse at Long Point, stay the night and then hike back to Harborcreek. Little did he envision the many obstacles that lay ahead. Using only a small compass to guide him, he soon found that heading due north was seldom possible as he encountered pillars of ice five feet high and snow drifts of over 10 feet. He told a reporter later, “I never expected to see what I saw. It was not just a smooth surface.”

As evening approached and he was still miles from land, he knew he would be spending a long cold night on the ice! The moon shone brightly for about an hour but later, clouds covered the sky leaving him in near total darkness. Using a small flashlight allowed him to continue his northward trek. He said, “The flashlight lit up these huge ice chunks with a fluorescent glow into eerie forms and shapes like those of a barren planet. Sometimes I fell on the jagged surface and just lay there on the ice. I knew I could not lie down long or I would freeze.” He also said that one of the most vivid recollections of that long night was of the small pinholes in the ice through which the water below was periodically forced under pressure to spout up into the air and freeze. The frozen spurts looked to him like telephone poles standing straight up

all over the lake. He told the Erie Morning News later, “I knew my planned route from Shade’s Beach to Long Point was about 32 miles but I figured I must have walked over 50 miles because of the drifts and ice chunks I had to walk around.”



Gene Heuser

Well past daybreak on Sunday morning, Gene reached the lighthouse where he saw some shacks belonging to a team of Canadian scientists making a lake study. They didn’t believe that he had just strolled over from the nation to the south until he showed them his identification. Canadian police escorted him to the mainland at Port Rowan, Ontario. Gene quickly revised his original plan of walking back to Harborcreek and instead called his brother in Buffalo to pick him up. (*With experience comes wisdom.*)

While in Canada, Gene learned that a North East man, Walter Lick had walked across frozen Lake Erie in 1912. (*Walter was the subject of the previous Tales & Treasures.*) “I’m going to look him up if I can,” Gene said. (*I wonder if he ever did! Does anyone know?*)

Gene graduated from Harbor Creek High School in 1949 and was a member of the Presque Isle Yacht Club. He also served on the Great Lakes Commission for nine years. Gene died in May of 1998. Walter Lick died in 1981.

Harold L. Kirk

All information for “Tales & Treasures” comes from source material found in the archives of the Harborcreek Historical Society. Such material may be based on facts, family legends or popular history. Anyone having substantiated conflicting data please contact the Society. Attention, H. L. Kirk.