

Eagle Lake 4th of July Parade

On the night of July 3rd, twenty-five years ago, my late husband Dick Stoops and I were anchored in "lake one". Tied up to our boat on one side was the boat of our friends Nat and Bob Okeley and on the other side were Herm and Kay DeGroot in their speedboat. We were visiting with our friends, enjoying the warm summer evening along with a few cocktails, when Dick said, "Why don't we have a boat parade tomorrow." That sounded like a great idea to the rest of us and so the plans were made.

We decided to meet in lake two a little before 2:00pm. From there, we headed for lake one accompanied by a tape of patriotic music that Dick had hurriedly made. I don't remember what songs were on that tape, but I do remember singing "This Land is Your Land" several times.

As we rode along singing with the tape and honking our horn, we motioned to and hollered at the people on shore to come and join our parade. There ended up being between twenty and thirty boats following us that year. One in particular that I will always remember was a rowboat with two women in it. One of the women was holding a flag and the other one was rowing her heart out trying to keep up. Finally, someone tossed her a rope and towed them the rest of the way.

For a few years, notices were placed in mailboxes all around the lake, including Heritage Estates and Eagle Heights. One of those years there were 58 boats in the parade - the record so far. For the most part, though, word of mouth has been the main way to let people know. Hardly a year has gone by that someone hasn't called the morning of the 4th inquiring about whether there would be a parade and/or what time it would start.

I'm very excited that we will have our twenty-fifth annual 4th of July Parade this year. I even made a new sign to put on the side of my boat! I know that Dick was honored to be the leader of the parade for many years and I was proud to take his place in 1999. Dick surely had a good idea that night twenty-five years ago and I think it would be wonderful if that 58-boat record could be broken this year in his memory.

Marlene Stoops