

Elmer Andersen's North Shore legacy

BY ANDREW SLADE, SICA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On November 17, 2004, flags across Minnesota stood at half-mast in honor of the passing of Governor Elmer L. Andersen. In a grassy field at Sugarloaf Cove in Schroeder, a 10-inch white spruce stood at full height, also in honor of the governor.

A flagpole in Grand Marais might seem very distant from the center of power in Saint Paul, but Governor Andersen's vision spread statewide. Throughout his life and career, Governor Andersen and his family did many wonderful things for the North Shore. He always sought and generally found the "win-win" ideas that move all citizens forward.

Elmer Andersen was a self-confessed "liberal Republican," breaking down party lines throughout his career. His approach to policy issues is reminiscent of an old slogan of the Green Party, "Not left or right but ahead." Examples of his influence can be felt up and down the North Shore:

He played a critical role in the state legislature in the establishment of the University of Minnesota Duluth, now considered "A Great University on a Great Lake."

His advocacy for the taconite amendment both as governor and in the years following set the path for today's thriving taconite industry on the North Shore and the Iron Range.

He supported innovative economic development and quality education at Grand Portage.

Perhaps Governor Andersen's greatest contribution to the North Shore of today was the development of three new public access sites, including Sugarloaf Cove. Sugarloaf Interpretive Center Association exists today as the positive alternative to the safe harbor and boat launch initially proposed for the Sugarloaf Cove site. Now the site is preserved for restoration and interpretation. Furthermore, two additional boat launches have been developed thanks to Governor Andersen's leadership on the Sugarloaf issue. The significant boat launch at Taconite Harbor uses an already-developed area. At Twin Points, what had been a family resort is now both a boat launch and a new state Scientific and Natural Area. This was truly a win-win solution.

Governor Andersen's last financial contribution to Sugarloaf came in Spring 2004, to plant a native spruce tree. That little seedling stands less than a foot tall on land that had been heavily used in the Sugarloaf log rafting

SICA's VISION is a healthy Minnesota North Shore of Lake Superior where an informed citizenry takes personal and group responsibility to ensure that natural and ecological systems and human economic and social systems coexist in a fashion sustainable into the future.

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Cove

SUGARLOAF'S FIRST CITIZEN

Elmer L. Andersen earned many titles in his public and business life. He was often referred to as Minnesota's First Citizen. His long lifetime of service to Minnesota's libraries, universities, newspapers, the environment, and citizens certainly earned him that title. He was also known as Senator, Regent, President, CEO, and Chairman of the Board. Because he exemplified the best qualities any state could wish for in its chief executive officer, I always called him Governor. In his modesty, he probably would have preferred just Elmer. This newsletter acknowledges him as founding director. Governor Andersen meant so much to SICA that perhaps we, too, would do best to think of him as SICA's first citizen.

SICA owes its existence to Elmer Andersen and the optimism that was a cornerstone of his life. In 1991, the Department of Natural Resources and the North Shore Management Board began promoting a plan for harbors of refuge to be constructed all along the North Shore. Sugarloaf Cove was designated as the first site for construction. Plans for the development ... featuring a full marina, 300 boat slips, condominiums, and a campground ... were published in the Grand Marais newspaper. The plan had some support, but many were horrified, and even most folks who wanted a safe place to launch their boats thought the scale of development too big. Some (including me) thought that the only way to stop the marina project was through a lawsuit. I researched the law, gathered evidence, lined up potential witnesses, and began drafting pleadings when Emily Andersen suggested that her father might be helpful and arranged a meeting for me with him. It turned out to be the most pivotal meeting of my life.

Governor Andersen patiently listened to my presentation and then began gently asking the tough questions: What made Sugarloaf a special place? Should all North Shore development be curtailed? Did fisherfolk have a legitimate need

for a safe place to launch boats? If so, could that need be met while preserving Sugarloaf? What was the human history at Sugarloaf? Who would join us in working to preserve Sugarloaf? Who would oppose us? He did not admonish me for not being able to answer his questions. Instead, he suggested that we begin to work together to find the answers.

For months we attended public meetings in Duluth and in Cook and Lake counties. To my surprise, at a Schroeder township meeting, Governor Andersen promised that we would help Schroeder get a boat launch at a different location. We talked with DNR folks, sailors, fishers, treehuggers, professors, and developers.

Finally, at a meeting at the home of retired UMD provost Dr. Robert Heller, Governor Andersen suggested that it was time for us to take positive, rather than negative, action. He believed that we could create such an appealing alternative to a marina that there would be no need to go to court. This was not an unusual position for him. Always the optimist, Governor Andersen often observed that it was better to be for something than against something. He thought that we should form an organization dedicated to public education, scientific research, and the preservation and interpretation of the natural and cultural history of the North Shore. He opined that saving Sugarloaf Cove was a good place for this new organization to start. We all concurred and agreed to get to work drafting bylaws, recruiting a board, writing a mission statement, and outlining our first project. There were five of us at that meeting, but Governor Andersen was the only one who grasped what we were doing: we were conducting the first meeting of the Sugarloaf Interpretive Center Association.

I hope that each of you, in your own time, will take a thoughtful moment to be inspired by the life, vision, and optimism of SICA's first citizen, Elmer L. Andersen.

STEVE PIHLAJA, SICA BOARD MEMBER

ShoreLink: The emphasis is on the connections

BY ANDREW SLADE

One of the lasting legacies of the Andersen family for Sugarloaf Interpretive Center Association is ShoreLink, a program to strengthen interpretive organizations up and down the North Shore through networking, collaborative programming and training. ShoreLink, thanks to a grant from Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program, is up and running again.

I had been involved with ShoreLink in the mid-1990s when I worked for Lake Superior Center and represented one of the groups being "linked." It was a great initiative at the time, pulling together diverse organizations and agencies around the common mission of interpreting and protecting Lake Superior. North Shore interpretation oldtimers still have the three-ring binder full of information on their shelves. Emily Andersen, Elmer's daughter and a very active member of the SICA board, was the main driving force behind ShoreLink and her emphasis on thoroughness and collaboration is still apparent.

In June 2003 I had the wonderful opportunity of visiting with Governor Andersen in his home in Saint Paul. He revisited his connections with Sugarloaf and the North Shore

and paid particular attention to the formation of ShoreLink. Only he pronounced it differently than anyone else I had ever heard. His emphasis was on the "Link" half of the name, not the "Shore." Not SHORElink, but ShoreLINK.

Not until that day, listening to the governor share his memories, did I fully understand ShoreLink or its potential. The North Shore is full of tremendous resources, from its scenic views and beautiful trails to its fascinating history and varied economy. Along this narrow, fragile strip of land, the pieces all affect each other.

The new ShoreLink will not only update that great directory, but it will engage those organizations in training and collaborative programming. The directory will move onto the web. Sugarloaf will collaborate with cities and the national forest to strengthen existing outreach programs. Great connections will occur, strengthening North Shore coastal interpretation.

While ShoreLink may never be the overarching connecting fabric for all these pieces, it can and will be a force for improving interpretation, and thus understanding, of the pieces and how they affect each other.



Storyteller Kevin Strauss thrilled local families with his 'Tales with Tails' at Sugarloaf's first ever Halloween program, supported by generous donations at the August annual meeting.

Another North Shore Evening

On the evening of Sunday, November 7, the northern lights put on one of their best displays in years. The display was visible across Minnesota. But in Minnetonka, supporters of Sugarloaf and fans of the North Shore got a double feature. SICA's annual "North Shore Evening" brought the spirit of the North Shore to the Twin Cities and raised over \$6000 in support of our work in restoration and interpretation. Governor Andersen would no doubt have been pleased to see such broad support for the North Shore and for Sugarloaf.

Thanks to our most generous hosts, Phil and Julie Magney, those in attendance enjoyed an evening full of North Shore spirit. Jay Steinke shared beautiful photos from his new book North Shore Experience. SICA board member Margit Berg shared delicious soups. The silent auction was filled with unique items, ranging from a guided sea kayak tour to an overnight at the

Gunflint Lodge. Once again, Craig Blacklock's large-format prints were a hit in the bidding.

To the twenty new members who joined that night or before, welcome aboard!

Also, thanks to the following donors for supporting our fundraiser.

*Blacklock Gallery
Bob and Marveen Minish
Dick and Ella Slade
Duluth Pack
Fran Mullin
Gunflint Lodge
Judy McGann
Karen Lane
Lake Superior Magazine
Last Chance Fabricating
Lutsen Resort
Margit and Tom Berg
Mark and Tammy Magney
Marlyn Johnson
Northern Lights Books and Gifts
Roger Macdonald
Sivertson's Gallery
Tom Beery
Waters Edge Trading Company*



This white spruce was planted in June 2004, near the interpretive center at Sugarloaf.

North Shore legacy

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operation. An index-card sized plaque marks the tree and his support. When that tree is fifty feet tall, the plaque might draw some curious questions: who was Elmer Andersen and why would he plant a tree on the North Shore? For today at least, we know the answer to those questions.



Eleanor, Emily and Elmer Andersen, part of Sugarloaf's founding family.

Sugarloaf to Restore the North Shore's "Lost Forest"

Before European settlement, the North Shore was covered with conifers. White pine dominated the shore from Duluth to Little Marais, and spruce took over east of there. Now, thanks to 150 years of development, the forest has changed and changed again and much of the native conifer forest is gone. Worse, because of deer browse and other ecological factors, the native pines, cedar and spruce have a difficult

time reestablishing.

Sugarloaf Interpretive Center Association has received a grant from the Great Lakes National Program Office to work with landowners to restore native conifer forest along the shore. SICA will work with both public and private landowners to manage their land for native forest regrowth.



A white pine seedling will be part of the future forest at Sugarloaf Cove. For now, it must be protected from deer browse.

Participating landowners will receive the following benefits:

- A professional Forest Stewardship Plan developed for their land, focused on native conifer restoration.
- Repeat visits from a trained forester to develop and implement the Forest Stewardship Plan
- Free tuition in the respected Woodland Advisors Program, a 45-hour training program to help understand forest ecology and the role of management
- Access to a migrant fund to pay for forestry work
- Access to genetically appropriate nursery stock.

The landowner project will start in January 2005 and run through September 2006.

The application deadline is December 31. SICA members who own or manage land on the North Shore are especially encouraged to apply. Those interested should request an application form from the SICA office, (218) 740-2755 or sugarloaf@lakenet.com.

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S I C A A C T I V I T I E S

J A N U A R Y 8

Second Saturday at Sugarloaf
Snowshoeing on the Superior Hiking Trail

F E B R U A R Y 1 2

Second Saturday at Sugarloaf
Maple syruping on the North Shore

F E B R U A R Y 1 2

SICA board meeting, Duluth. All welcome.

M A R C H 1 2

Second Saturday at Sugarloaf
North Shore owls

*All Second Saturday programs start at 10 am at the
Sugarloaf Cove Interpretive Center.*

Address Correction Requested

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