

# As the lakes open, so does rebirth of life

By George Vukelich  
Press Connection Writer

The lakes are being born, all over again.

Wingra is open. Monona is open. And Mendota will be next.

Life has again cracked through the hard shell of winter, and again there is freedom, tentative, testing, experimenting as the currents move and the waves form and the great waters breathe open-mouthed and run and race without restraints.

There is cautious freedom now. Soon there will be wild abandon.

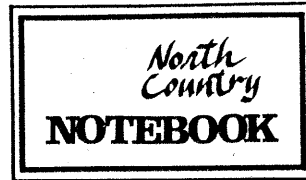
My God, the joy of it!

The links of the chains are shattered. The prison walls lie in rubble. The very stone has been rolled away from the tomb.

The waters are loosed and we are witness to the miracle of Creation again, had we but the eyes to see, the ears to hear and the wisdom to wonder.

Many have written of that miracle.

• One was Sigurd Olson, of Ely, Minn., and The World, father of us all, preeminent in the Council of



Tribal Elders.

"Even in my dreams," Sigurd Olson wrote in 1969, "the creeks and rivers of spring haunted me, the sound of running water, oozing rivulets from suddenly warmed banks, dogwood stems flaming in the sun, the birches of the ridges turning purple in their tops... Then the smells, the bittersweet resins of Balm Gilead, masses of balsam in the first real warmth, the thawing earth itself, a combination of odors so powerful it was as though the air were surcharged with them.

"All this colored my days, for this was the awakening and the beginning of life after the long sleep of winter. At times it seemed I too must burst with the swelling buds,

grow as they grew, reach for the sun, run over the hills along the streams and through the woods giving vent to the joy and excitement within me."

• Another was Aldo Leopold who wrote in "A Sand County Almanac:"

"On April nights when it became warm enough to sit outdoors, we love to listen to the proceedings of the convention in the marsh. There are long periods of silence when one hears only the winnowing of snipe, the hoot of a distant owl, or the nasal clucking of some amorous coot. Then, of a sudden, a strident honk resounds, and in an instant pandemonium echoes. There is a beating of pinions on water, a rushing of dark prows propelled by churning paddles, and a general shouting by the onlookers of a vehement controversy. Finally some deep honker has his last word, and the noise subsides, to that half-audible small talk that seldom ceases among geese. Once again, I would I were a muskrat!"

• Another was an even older Elder, the visionary Eastwick Evans, who, way back in 1818 wrote:

"There is something in the very name of wilderness, which charms the ear, and soothes the spirit of man. There is religion in it."

And finally there was Annie Dillard, our Pilgrim At Tinker Creek who wrote of this magical time:

"God empties himself into the earth like a cloud. God takes the substance, contours of a man, and keeps them, dying, rising, walking, and still walking wherever there is motion."

So then. The storm doors are open. The lakes are open. The very horizons are open. Standing on the shore, I stare at the unfettered waters knowing now that the Life that moves deep within them is the very same Life that moves deep within me. And you.

And if I could write about that as well as The Tribal Elders and Annie Dillard, I would.

And then I would launch the canoe.