

To a place where love grows

By George Vukelich
Press Connection Writer

BIG BEND — Years ago I reported for Wisconsin Trails Magazine that "Little Lakes" was a 15-acre chunk of Eden that Mel Ellis maintained smack in the middle of Big Bend, a village roughly 15 miles southwest of downtown Milwaukee.

I also reported that with its resident rainbow trout, its fat mallard population and its pine-fringed ponds, Little Lakes was indeed a vest-pocket wilderness.

I am now pleased to write again that as of last week, all of the above still holds true.

It was a darkened, rain-swept day as I drove up to the remembered house on the hill.

Gwen Ellis had the door open before I ever reached it.

"We've been following the newspaper strike on Milwaukee television," she said. "We wondered how you and the family were doing."

"Everybody's doing fine," I said. "We're going to chase all those loveless people right out of town."

Inside the home of Mel and Gwen Ellis, on the first day of November, 1977, I was suddenly fully aware of why, when I traveled from Madison for the first time in a whole month, I had somehow chosen to travel here.

It was more than the fact that the best outdoor writer in Wisconsin lived here. More than the fact that this lived-in house was cozy with bird books and plant books and fishing rods and floppy



GEORGE VUKELICH'S

North Country NOTEBOOK

field boots and split-oak chunks jammed into every nook and cranny in the basement and that the fireplaces now would blaze with warmth until next spring.

It was the fact that you could feel love in this place.

Love for five children and their children. Love for countless birds and plants and dogs and cats and trees and weeds.

Love for 15 acres of the good God's green and golden earth.

"We often hear people say they love a place," Sigurd Olson wrote only last year, "a flower, an individual, and we must not scoff, for it is emotion in its purest sense and one must not be ashamed of

showing or expressing it. Life without deep feeling is a barren waste, sterile, cold and meaningless."

"Love all the earth," the monk had said in *The Brothers Karamazov*, "every ray of God's light. Every grain of sand or blade of grass, every living thing. If you love the earth enough, you will learn the divine mystery."

"Go walk the place," Gwen Ellis said gently. "Take a flyrod to the spring pond."

I moved through the blessed rain and I never felt warmer or drier or more free in my life.

I remembered what the young

reporter, Jim Schuh, who had scabbed at *The Capital Times* for two days, wrote in his *Portage Register* column only last Saturday.

"The reporter felt like a whore ...He was being bought off by a shabby organization, without even the pretense of striving for a higher moral plane...He was disgusted with himself."

I positioned myself near the weeping willow on the spring pond and threw out Del Richardson's lovingly-tied Bomber girdle bug into the yellow leaves that swirled like a hatch on the living surface.

I spent hours there. Getting wet. Getting trout. Getting well. And when a monstrous rainbow from that other reality broke me off after 10 minutes, taking my tippet, my girdle bug, my very heart, I stood there, soaked and dumb and happy, staring at the broken tippet, flapping in the November rain.

God, I love this place, I said out loud. And I laughed like an idiot.

Purebred cats move into spotlight

By Rosemary Kendrick
Press Connection Writer

The beauty of cats is being highlighted this weekend at the Madison Cat Club's 17th annual purebred cat show taking place in the Dane County Expo Center's Youth Building.

Here are assembled almost 300

Kendrick ON PETS

of the most spectacular cats and kittens in the Midwest. Most are being shown by, or at least were bred by, professional cat breeders.

Breeding purebred animals on a

canine world, they apply very well to the breeding of cats or any other purebred animal.

Calling the breeder "a sculptor in living flesh." Or perhaps