

Sylvan Lake



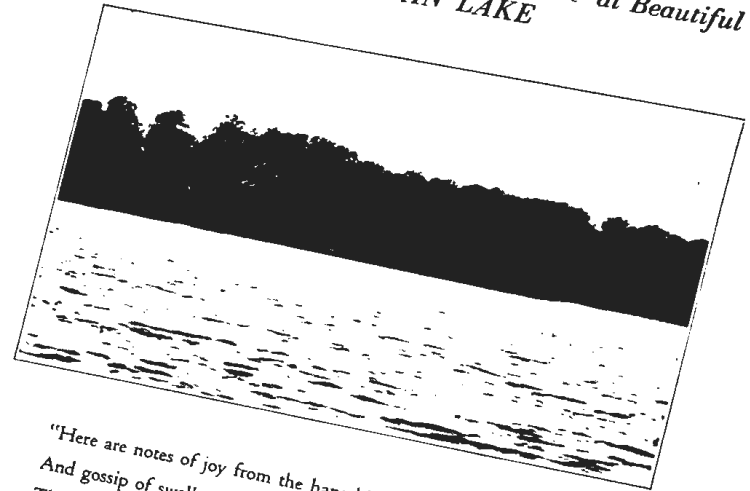
Sylvan Lake, Fremont Township, Lake County, Illinois

1923-1991

Sylvan Lake 1923-1991

TO THE WOODS
FOR THE SUMMER

*Come and Build Your Summer Home at Beautiful
SYLVAN LAKE*



"Here are notes of joy from the hang-bird and wren,
And gossip of swallows through all the sky;
The ground squirrel gayly chirps by his den,
And the wilding bee hums merrily by."

—William Cullen Bryant.

Cover of sales brochure

produced by A. G. Schwerman

In the promotion of Sylvan Lake. The promotion

stated: "To reach Sylvan Lake take Milwaukee Avenue (21 and 45)

*to Half Day. At Half Day turn left on Diamond Lake Road, continue through
Diamond Lake about a mile beyond and turn left on concrete to Sylvan Lake."*

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Acknowledgments

The Sylvan Lake Improvement Association wishes to thank the following people for their special contributions to the production of this historical project; Bill Bartz, Terri Borst, Jean Hamilton, Dave Hamm, Donn Hamm, Sally Harper, Rich Mirock, Jeanne Peterson and Victor Wallrab.

We also acknowledge with gratitude the aid of the many individuals who volunteered their photos and knowledge towards the preparation of this book.

No acknowledgment for this historical review of Sylvan Lake can be complete without the recognition of the long term contributions and commitment of this community of families.

Preface

Why do we, an unincorporated small private lake community have, or even want, a printed history? The reason is that we believe the Sylvan Lake community, its residents and its history are truly special. We want to reflect on what made this area special and to keep the spirit alive for the years to come. We are proud of where we have been and where we are going. Volunteer efforts of many, residents have shaped the community and continue to keep it alive and keep it so special. So this history is a tribute for all who helped create Sylvan Lake's past, present and future. It is impossible to mention everyone's name and accomplishments, so we apologize for omissions. This document was compiled in 1991 from a prior history written by Vic Wallrab published in 1970, the minutes of the Sylvan Lake Improvement Association and Garden Club, and memories of many residents. A special thanks goes to Jean Hamilton who started this project and the officers of the Improvement Association and Garden Club. To quote Sally Harper, "The cares of population encroachment, pollution and traffic are easily forgotten as one turns off Midlothian and proceeds over the dam into this oasis of beauty and tranquility."



Early view of the beach .
Facing east the dam is on
the left.

Early aerial view of
Sylvan Lake.
(Probably taken by
the Wright Brothers).
Midlothian Road is
the large road in the
lower left. The
beach, white raft,
and two sail boats
can be seen



The Creation of Sylvan Lake

Sylvan Lake, a small private lake and subdivision of about 180 homes, was the first man-made lake in northern Illinois. The lake was created and the surrounding area developed by Mr. August Schwerman in 1923 and 1924. Originally it was a slough containing springs and a flowing stream. Mr. Schwerman dammed the stream and the lake formed. Others interested in land development observed the results and quickly followed suit. Countryside and Forest Lake were among them.

The story of Sylvan Lake could hardly be told without telling some of the historical background of the August Schwerman family. August's father Henry was born in Hanover, Germany February 25, 1833. He left his farm in 1854 to find his fortune in America. He bought forty acres of wild land in Fremont Township and worked so industriously that by 1891 he owned two-hundred and forty-five acres.

August, the man who brought Sylvan Lake into the world, was born at Gilmer. He studied telegraphy

in Mundelein as a young man and became the telegraph operator and freight agent for the E. J. & E. He was appointed postmaster at Gilmer where he operated the general merchandise store and lumber yard. He served as treasurer of the Countryside Fire Protection Association, president of the Sylvan Lake Improvement Association and a member of the Board of Directors of the Lake County National Bank in Libertyville. He left Gilmer after forty-five years in the store and moved to a large lovely home he built on the slope overlooking the dam at 221 Highland where he lived until his death in 1949.

In the early 1900's this area was essentially the same as it had been before the white man came. The area was surrounded by a hilly, wooded area at a much higher elevation. The swales were boggy, full of rank growing swamp vegetation plus pretty wild flowers including buttercups, common blue violets, dog-toothed violets and wild geraniums. It was a wild area, undoubtedly beautiful, though there probably were few who thought so at the time. In the early 1900's swamps

and sloughs were considered useless, good-for-nothing wastelands. However, August had a vision that the swamp would make a good lake with houses built on the rolling wooded hills.

The first remembered bridge over this stream was built by Mr. Ed Umbdenstock. He cut trees, piled the logs over the stream and then laid planks across the top so he could drive over it. This worked quite well, except that after heavy rains the stream overflowed and washed out the bridge which then had to be rebuilt.

In the 1920's there was a great demand for summer homes in this area. Mr. Schwerman's idea for a new lake began to materialize. His plan was to create his own lake out of the big old slough by damming it at one end, leveling and deepening in spots, and cutting and removing some timber. He would subdivide into lots, build roads, provide well water and install electric power. The lots were only to be offered for sale to Lutherans as a private summer resort.

A large Lutheran Church picnic was held on what is now the west side of Sylvan Lake. A baseball game was played between the Concordia Colleges of Milwaukee and River Forest. The church ladies served lunch and Mr. Schwerman distributed a large white paper advertising his plans for this private resort. According to Mrs. Umbdenstock, "This was the first news most people had of the project."

August started construction of the lake. A dam was built of large rocks and stones cemented together. When it was partially completed, heavy rains fell and washed it away, making it necessary to start over. The water began to rise and in a fairly short time a pond started to form, which continued to grow until it became a beautiful lake. August named it Sylvan Lake which literally means surrounded by trees.

By the summer of 1924 the lake had risen to a satisfactory level. August drove up to the Spring Grove Fish Hatchery and hauled fish back in milk cans to stock the lake. The beach was developed and a pier built. Mr. Studer surveyed and laid out the lots.



A.G. Schwerman (standing on truck) and cans of fish from Spring Grove Hatchery for stocking Sylvan Lake.

Community wells were put in and pipes were laid to each lot. Roads, beginning with Sylvan Drive, were built by Ed, George and Clem Umbdenstock, Ed Jones and Harmie Bauman.

The first three lots were sold on October 8, 1924 to Charles F. Thoms, a retired businessman of Oak Park for \$1,500 each. The Libertyville weekly paper, the Register, reported that "Mr. Thoms' intention was to build a seven room cottage with basement and a large porch this winter and the balance next spring." The first home, however, was built by Bob Lucbbe for the Helberg's. More cottages were built including one for Albert Gilster and another for William Busse. All of the early homes were summer cottages.

Work was begun on the side bays. While deepening the west swalc, trouble developed in the form of



A.G. Schwerman & Co. General Merchandise Store located in Gilmer in the early days.

a giant elm stump. It proved very resistant. Though they dug, chopped around it and tried to pull it out with their horse teams, they were unable to budge it. Hot, sticky with sweat, tired and discouraged they stood there. Finally August said, "I'd sure like to get that thing out of there." Ed said slowly, "Maybe,—a little dynamite would do it. Would you use it if I got it?" The dynamite was purchased, carefully placed in strategic spots, the fuses were lit and everyone ran. The stump blew out but came down right through the roof of one of the new summer cottages. It left a huge hole and, of course, the stump too. Fortunately no one was in the house but since the owner was expected on the weekend, a carpenter was hired and the house repaired before the owner was aware anything had happened.



The magic of an ice storm on the trees and the lake transforms Sylvan Lake into a winter ice palace, 1967.

News of this new private man-made lake and subdivision was getting around. However, Mr. Schwerman was unable to attract enough Lutherans to buy his lots so he changed his advertising offering them to others. As an incentive to purchase at Sylvan Lake, August offered to plant 2 evergreen trees on each lot purchased. August's nephew, Bob, planted these trees



Cub Scouts in 1952 at dedication of Park. Dennis Dalotowski raising flag which covered his father's casket (his father died in World War II.) Scoutmaster (We think is Ernie Washburn.)

DEDICATE PARK AT SYLVAN LAKE

**August Schwerman's Memory
To Be Honored During Ceremonies.**

SYLVAN LAKE—Sylvan Lake's largest park will be dedicated at 3:30 p.m. Sunday to the memory of the late August Schwerman, founder of this community.

At Sylvan Lake, Mr. Schwerman spent years promoting and building a residential community where people of average income could enjoy the advantages of living around a private lake.

To honor his work, his friends and neighbors decided to change the name of Lindbergh Park to Schwerman Memorial Park.

Flying from the mast during the dedication ceremonies Sunday will be the flag that covered the casket of one of Sylvan Lake's war heroes, Pfc. Jean Dalotowski. The flag, presented to the community by his widow, Dorothy, will fly from the staff on all proper occasions.

when he was a teenager. It is likely that some of the tall, old trees that still stand were planted as part of this promotion.

The lake was beautiful and covered more than 33 acres. The hillsides sloped rather sharply down to the waters edge and were covered with a variety of large trees, such as walnut and hickory. The residents delighted in gathering nuts in the fall.

Although some permanent homes had been built, Sylvan Lake remained a subdivision of summer homes until 1941 when many home owners began to winterize.

Those who knew August Schwerman will never forget him. He was kind and helpful and always took a friendly interest in the residents of Sylvan Lake. Many remember how he loaded his little pickup truck with sweet corn and drove around giving it away. He would say, "I had too much in the garden." In 1952, Sylvan Lake residents decided to honor him by renaming their largest park, Lindbergh Park, to the Schwerman Memorial Park. They said at the dedication, "In memory of the many years he devoted to promoting and building a residential community where people of average income could enjoy the advantages of country living." A boulder with a memorial plaque was placed in the park.



A.G. Schwerman using sheep to trim grass at Sylvan Lake, 1932. Name at the peak of the house is "Eagles Nest"

The Sylvan Lake Improvement Association

A need for an organization to maintain the lake and various common properties such as parks and easements resulted in the formation of the Sylvan Lake Improvement Association. This non-profit organization had its first meeting on August 4, 1940. Annual dues were set at \$5 and a fee of \$5 assessed to provide working funds and enable the creation of a corporation. August Schwerman signed a Quit Claim Deed dated August 25, 1942 which assigned all playgrounds, parks, terraces, streets, drives and dam to the Sylvan Lake Improvement Association. Mr. Schwerman agreed not to add any more property to the subdivision so that it would remain a small select community.

Association by-laws were established upon incorporation. The stated purpose of this association was to organize property owners of Sylvan Lake to maintain the lake, beach, parks, easements and other public properties, and to engage in and conduct activities beneficial to the community.

Nine Board members are elected by the residents of Sylvan Lake. Committees are appointed to address the following: lake management, beach, parks and easements, recreation, safety, greeting and newsletter. Association dues are approved by residents at an annual meeting. The dues fund the projects that benefit the community and volunteers supply labor. The Association effectively provides many services that local taxing bodies normally provide. The difference, however, is the time and effort volunteered by residents who care about this unique community. The Association efforts keep the parks maintained, the playgrounds safe for our children, the beach clean and reserved for resident use, the lake relatively weed free and stocked with game fish, and they coordinate recreational activities such as volleyball leagues and tournaments. The Association also organizes various social events to bring the residents together. This community involvement makes Sylvan Lake a truly wonderful place to live and raise a family.

Garden Club

Sylvan Lake families have always taken pride in beautifying their homes with gardens and landscaping. The first meeting of the Garden Club was held at the home of Mrs. Gilster on August 21, 1941. Gertrude North was the first president. The women of the lake met for the purpose of organizing an auxiliary to the Sylvan Lake Improvement Association. The club's major purpose would be to beautify the areas around the lake.

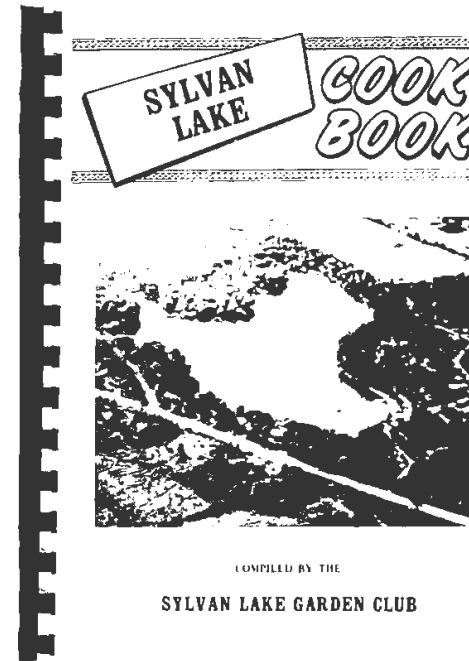


Inscription under newspaper photograph.
 "Pictured are eight of the 13 original members of the Sylvan Lake Garden club who attended a party given in their honor recently at the home of Mrs. Harry Chalmers. The club was founded in 1941. Seated, left to right, are Mrs. August Schwerman, Mrs. Louis Bussone, first secretary-treasurer, Mrs. H. Lynn North, first president, and Mrs. Charles Stayart, first vice president. Standing, left to right, are Mrs. Arthur Gilster, Mrs. Charles Wallrab, Mrs. Lyman U. Haviland, and Miss Lena Scherman."
 (Photo by Marion S. Schroeder.)

The second meeting was held in July 1942 and the first of many fund raising projects was begun. The Garden Club hoped to earn \$34 by selling 144 bottles of vanilla. Although this took two years the goal was eventually attained. Some subsequent early projects reportedly earned up to \$1200! In the early years the Garden Club loaned the Association money when funds were short. The loans were usually canceled.

The first few years Garden Club meetings were held only in the summer "because so many left the lake for their respective home on account of school openings." During the 50's, however, the monthly meetings evolved. In addition to sponsoring a girl scout troop and summer swimming lessons, memorable programs included: Come as you are breakfasts, Book reviews, Crazy/tacky hat contests, Wine tastings, Recipe nights, Card parties, White elephant parties, Fashion shows, Foreign exchange students and Meat cutting demonstrations.

In 1943 the group decided to send cards to members who were hospitalized and flowers when there was a death. The Sunshine Committee was formed in 1957 to carry out this function and continues to do this today with the added task of greeting all new residents with a member of the Association. Since 1965 many residents have appreciated Rita Rak's Sunshine activities and delicious cookies.



1974 Garden Club Money Making project

In 1988 the Garden Club assumed responsibility for the Meals at Home Program. This effort was originally started by Betty Scharff and the Sylvan Lake Women's Bible Study Group in 1983. Almost 100 meals are served annually to ill residents and their families.

CHARLES RAISER & SON
 MANUFACTURERS OF
 FLAVORING EXTRACTS
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*Please Print Name
 Let us know
 what you would
 like - Order
 blank attached -
 Thank you!
 L.S. Raiser*

Here Are Six Money Making Plans For YOU

<p>No. 1 YOUR PROFIT 41% ORDER OF 144 BOTTLES - One dozen You will receive 144 per bottle. 144 x \$1.00 = \$144.00 @ 14¢ per bottle = \$20.16 YOUR PROFIT 41% = \$123.84 Minimum cost is \$20.16</p>	<p>No. 4 YOUR PROFIT 41% ORDER OF 4 BOTTLES You will receive 4 per bottle. 4 x \$1.00 = \$4.00 @ 14¢ per bottle = \$0.56 YOUR PROFIT 41% = \$3.44 Minimum cost is \$0.56</p>
<p>No. 2 YOUR PROFIT 41% ORDER OF 18 BOTTLES - One dozen You will receive 18 per bottle. 18 x \$1.00 = \$18.00 @ 14¢ per bottle = \$2.52 YOUR PROFIT 41% = \$15.48 Minimum cost is \$2.52</p>	<p>No. 5 YOUR PROFIT 41% ORDER OF 12 BOTTLES You will receive 12 per bottle. 12 x \$1.00 = \$12.00 @ 14¢ per bottle = \$1.68 YOUR PROFIT 41% = \$10.32 Minimum cost is \$1.68</p>
<p>No. 3 YOUR PROFIT 41% ORDER OF 24 BOTTLES - One dozen You will receive 24 per bottle. 24 x \$1.00 = \$24.00 @ 14¢ per bottle = \$3.36 YOUR PROFIT 41% = \$20.64 Minimum cost is \$3.36</p>	<p>No. 6 YOUR PROFIT 41% ORDER OF 6 BOTTLES You will receive 6 per bottle. 6 x \$1.00 = \$6.00 @ 14¢ per bottle = \$0.84 YOUR PROFIT 41% = \$5.16 Minimum cost is \$0.84</p>

"Vanilla" order form used in early money making project

Social Events

Many dances, carnivals, card games and house parties have been held through the years for fun, and funds, for the community. In the early years these fund raisers were a main source of support for all lake improvements, as well as regular expenses. The Winter Club and Snow Shovelers sponsored parties into the early 1970's. The Sylvan Lake Improvement Association sponsored annual dances welcoming all Newcomers. In November 1962, the dance orchestra cost only \$85. These early dances were well attended and featured refreshments following a Grand March led by Kurt and Louise Koppitz. One of the most memorable dances was that orchestrated by Lance Penney commemorating the bicentennial. Period dress, portrait photos and elaborate decorations contributed to the success. Dances were held at the Countryside Fire Station but when the cost of renting the facility rose, other buildings were explored. One of the best turnouts followed the winter lake dredging. A "Let's Get Back Together" dance was held at the Village Barn in Hawthorn Woods. Western dress and casual atmosphere was the theme. A low treasury balance meant music by records, but at the last minute, Ann Cavanaugh tracked down a new group of musicians who donated their time for the experience and the refreshments.

Dance attendance started to decline so the Association and the Garden Club looked for other events to draw residents together socially. Fourth-of-July and Labor Day picnics had long been a feature and they continue to draw big crowds. On Labor Day "1976" activities included a fishing derby, volley ball, lunch at the park, games at the beach, sailboat races, canoe races, row boat races, swimming events, baseball at the park, adult games and a raffle. Older teenagers jostled with padded poles while balancing in canoes. Somehow the Washburn boys always seemed to win this event.

In the fall of 1975, Sally Harper and Marsha Swissler organized the first annual Oktoberfest. Syl-



Sale boat races! Start at the dam, go around the markers at each bay and first one back wins!



Fourth of July celebration at the beach. Beef, Beer, hot dogs and good times!

van Lake's own meteorologist (who no longer lives here) recommended holding this event late in October as the weather predictions were favorable. What started as drizzle, quickly progressed to rain, sleet and snow. Oktoberfest continued to be a great social event, but it rose to new heights when orchestrated by Don Kroening and clan. What was generally an evening event, expanded to day long activities including flea markets, hay rides, story tellers, live music, bonfires, and super brats and beverages served under a tent.

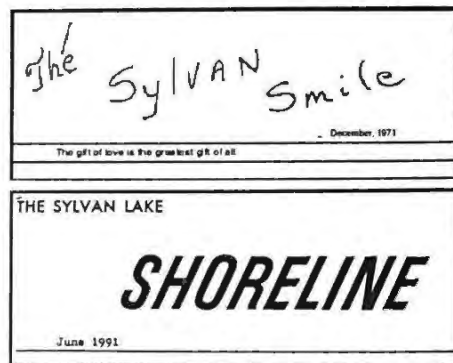
Although the first Oktoberfest held the honors as the coldest outing in known history, the Winter Carnival held in February 1979 saw temperatures dip to zero. Weber cookers filled with red-hot charcoal could barely keep the beer snuggled beneath from freezing. At subsequent winter outings hot mulled cider and wine were served. Residents have been known to play touch football, softball, golf and other games on the ice. Camaraderie is enjoyed.

Sylvan Lake News

Since its beginning the Sylvan Lake Improvement Association Board has attempted to keep residents informed of plans, programs and projects. In early 1954 the first newsletter was distributed. In 1971 the newsletter became the "Sylvan Smile" edited by Don Metz. In 1973 it evolved into the "Shoreline" by Ralph Schlenker and Rich Borst then followed by Tom Cavanaugh. Sally Harper published the Shoreline 8 to 10 times a year from the mid-70's to 1991 and added her touch of notable quotes and humor that were enjoyed by all.

Fern McCallum started contributing to the Libertyville Independent Register "Items" column in the 40's. This continued through the 60's and included news about Association and Garden Club activities and items about area residents.

The Garden Club distributes their own newsletter for their activities and also contributes to the Shoreline. Special events, such as recreational activities, social gatherings and clean-up day, are heralded by flyers placed on mail boxes. Bulletin boards at the Beach and Bjorkland Park were erected by the suggestion of Jerry Kroll for posting of notices by groups and individuals.



Mast Heads of Sylvan Lake, The Sylvan Smile as used in 1971 and the current "Mast Head" THE SYLVAN LAKE SHORELINE

Community Projects

Over the years there have been many community projects undertaken by the residents of Sylvan Lake. This section describes the more noteworthy activities.

Until the township took over maintenance of the roads in 1971, the Winter Club followed by the Snow Shovelers assumed responsibility for snow removal. The winter residents had to shovel themselves and their neighbors out before going to work. These hard workers were rewarded with a party in appreciation of their efforts.

In 1970 a fish kill was necessary because of an over abundance of rough carp and bull heads which suppressed the population of sport fish. A chemical called rotenone killed the fish and caused them to float to the surface for a short time. It was necessary to scoop up the fish before they sank to the bottom of the lake. Power boats were even allowed to assist in the effort. Big containers were provided to collect the fish to be hauled away. Oh, what an odor! Prizes were given for the biggest carp and food and beverages were supplied to the workers. Following recommendations of the Department of Conservation, the lake was restocked with bass and bluegill.

The Sylvan Lake beach area has always been considered a prime candidate for upkeep and renewal. To prevent erosion of the grass area, a concrete curb was proposed early in 1972. Don Bjorkland was in charge of this project and in August 243 feet of curbing was put in by manpower provided by residents under Don's supervision. Don also suggested tearing down the old boat house and replacing it with a steel structure. In August 1973 a basketball court was poured in Schwerman Park and the base for the new boat house was poured in September. Dan Kaloway was always knee deep in concrete on these projects, as well as being a great help digging holes for tree planting and playground posts. The new boat house was completed in

November and the old boat house was dismantled in March by community efforts. Don Bjorklund's contribution to Sylvan Lake was recognized by renaming a playground, Bjorklund Park, and honoring him by a memorial plaque.

Further work at the beach was done under the supervision of Jerry Kroll. The large planter housing the honey locust tree, the extension of the beach, and work on seawalls and the boat launch area were accomplished under Jerry's leadership. Recently, new "quality" signs demonstrate the workmanship of Ken Bellinder.



Sylvan Lake beach located on the north, east end of the lake.

During the winter of 1976-77, a severe winter fish kill occurred. A population study indicated a significant reduction in bass which allowed a sharp increase in carp. The lake management committee headed by Roger Halvorsen recommended an aeration system to oxidize and remove organic bottom sediments. Sylvan Lake's management committee has been used as a model by other lakes in the state. The lake is constantly monitored and action, such as weed and algae treatment and restocking, is taken as needed.

A fine example of a successful community effort was the defeat of a proposed garbage land fill within a mile of the lake. In 1977-78 Waste Management tried three times to gain approval for the dump. The Stones and the letter writing campaign organized by Stan and Rita Rak helped defeat the project. Don Deuster was instrumental in holding a public hearing which led to the EPA's rejection of the land fill plan.

The most controversial project was the dredging of the bays in the winter of 1980. Although dredging was first discussed in 1953, after months of planning, study, argument and a special \$150 assessment it finally became a reality. The bays had filled with silt from surrounding field run-off and it was feared that the quality of the entire lake would continue to deteriorate with silt encroachment. Siphons were used to lower the lake level. Four 4" and two 6" plastic flexible tubes were placed over the dam for draining the lake into Indian Creek. These were slashed several times, requiring a 24 hour resident patrol for 17 days in October. A fire below the dam was kept burning to keep the two person/two hour patrol warm. Al Grandt provided his camper on the dam for shelter while the Grahams provided electricity. After the lake froze, the silt was successfully removed with bulldozers and other equipment. The lake refilled the summer of 1981 with swimming, boating and fishing back to normal. The nature of our watershed predicts a repeat dredging in the future and lessons learned from this experience should prove helpful to our future. One of the benefits gained from lowering the lake was the opportunity to improve or build seawalls.



Late Fall when the lake was siphoned off to expose the shallow bays. Below, after the lake had frozen, the silt is removed.



Cleaning begins in Sylvan Lake

If Sylvan Lake seems a bit more shallow than usual it is The Sylvan Lake Homeowners Association is having the lake lowered about four feet in order to clean out silt and decayed leaves from the lake's bays.

The homeowners group is unable to dredge the lake, because of the high cost of such an operation and the lack of a pond to drain the lake into, said Roger Halvorson, a member of the lake rehabilitation committee. He said the silt buildup in the bays has started to spread to the rest of the lake, and eventually would reduce the depth of the lake, which is about 14 feet at its deepest point.

Currently, siphons are draining off some of the water into Indian Creek, the lake's natural drainage point. When the ground freezes, an excavator will be able to scoop out the debris left in the bays.

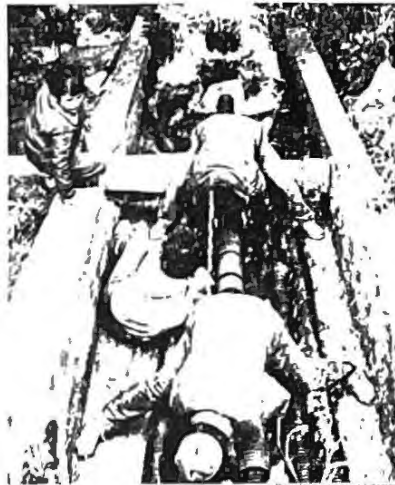
Halvorson said the excavation project is being aided by other lake homeowners groups, including Loch Lomond. Small lakes are difficult to dredge and the cost of such projects is usually more than such groups can afford.

In Sylvan Lake, about 167 homeowners were assessed \$150 for the \$15,000 project completed.

"NOT ALL of the homeowners are glad to see the work being done, however. Some people are concerned about the lake refilling in the spring. But we had advice from the county health department that there will be plenty of water to fill it up again," Halvorson said.

Others feel that the assessment is benefiting the lakefront property owners more than other people, according to Halvorson. But he said, the excavation project was approved by the association's board and there was brought to a general election by the homeowners. "If we plant trees in a park then the people who live across from the park benefit more," he said.

The association has had some problems with vandalism at the siphoning bays, and discovered some holes punctured in the tubing. As a result, the group has set up a 24 hour watch at the lake to prevent further damage. "We haven't really had trouble getting people to do it. I think it has really brought people together," Halvorson said.



ADJUSTING THE DAM, Sylvan Lake homeowners are having the lake lowered about four feet in order to clean out silt and decayed leaves from the lake's bays.

In late May a Saturday morning is set aside for community clean-up. Residents gather to rid the entrances, parks and easements of winter debris. Food and beverages are supplied to workers at noon. Along with cleaning up the area, the weekend is marked for the Carp-A-Rama. From noon on Saturday until Sunday afternoon, residents are encouraged to catch and keep carp and other overabundant pan fish. The big count down is Sunday with cash prizes for biggest fish as well as cash for each fish. A special bounty has been offered for the capture of the elusive Colonel Carp. This event may not make a significant dent in the carp population but it is fun and the youngsters go home with some spending money.



None of the many volunteer projects had a greater scope than the rebuilding of the playgrounds at Point Comfort and Schwerman Parks in 1988 and 1990. Each of these projects required a month of labor by residents, ages 8 to 80. What was not as obvious is the months of planning by the Mihels, Hansons, Polivkas and Borsts. The smiles on the children's faces was enough payment for the many crew chiefs and workers, too numerous to mention.

The Boy Scouts of America have left a lasting mark on our community. Over the years John Chesney's Eagle Scout candidates have improved the dam and built seawalls at several easements. Curbing was installed at the Midlothian entrance and steps built in Juneau Terrace. Easement and terrace signs, bridges and foot paths have been constructed and improved. Over the years they have clearly added to the beauty, protected the ecology and improved the safety for all of us.

None of the many volunteer projects had a greater scope than the rebuilding of the playgrounds at Point Comfort and Schwerman Parks



The Sylvan Lake Chronology

The following chronology was extracted from Association minutes, newsletters and Garden Club notes. It shows our progress over the last 50 years, although sometimes rather slow.

- 1940 - First meeting of Improvement Association on August 4. Dues set at \$5 to provide for working funds.
 - Decision to incorporate.
- 1941 - Fifty-nine members in Association and dues set at \$10.
 - First meeting of Garden Club on August 21.
 - Special meeting called. Resolution passed to post sign at beach prohibiting soap bathing and changing of clothes. Construction of two sixty foot piers and installation of water fountain at beach approved.
- 1942 - August Schwerman deeds playgrounds, parks, terraces, roads and dam to Sylvan Lake Improvement Association.
- 1943 - Garden Club built benches at Point Comfort Park.
- 1944 - Study with Fish and Wild Life Department of Interior to rid lake of "weedy and scummy" appearance.

- Construction of long bench area at beach to hold back dirt and prevent erosion.
- Letter from Mr. Schwerman reminding home owners not to plant shrubbery on the roads.
- Mrs. Gilpin, newly elected president of the Garden Club outlined her plans in a "meaty and pithy talk." She suggested that two women could handle beach patrol during the week and the men could take over on the week-ends.
- 1946 - Motion made that no trees, shrubs or fences be placed beyond property lines.
- 1946 - Rules and regulations include:
 - Speed limit 13 to 15 Mph as posted No outdoor toilets No fence, trees or shrubs beyond property
- 1949 - Motion made to rename Lindbergh to Schwerman Park. Discussions regarding volunteer improvements included ball diamond and community house.
- 1950 - Garden Club contributed \$150 to the Association for playground equipment at Point Comfort Park.

- 1951 - Association voted \$40 to the \$100 Garden Club budget for beach sand and \$50 to Winter Club for snow removal.
 - Swings installed at Point Comfort Park.
- 1952 - Baseball backstops installed by Garden Club.
- 1953 - Association discussions included dredging, seawalls, and stocking of northens and pickerel.
 - Discussions held regarding incorporation, but subject dropped due to lack of interest.
- 1954 - Lake recommendations include weed control, lower lake kill fish, build seawalls and restock fish.
 - First Sylvan Lake newsletter distributed.
 - A note was sent to property owners looking for \$10-\$20 donations to solve weed problem.
- 1956 - Garden Club provided first raft for lake.
- 1957 - Garden Club Sunshine Committee formed.
- 1959 - A general meeting resolution for township to take over road maintenance.
- 1961 - Dues were still \$15 but 48 members donated an extra \$5 after an appeal for funds.
 - Lights were installed at entrances and beach.
- 1962 - Natural gas arrives, owners convert from oil.
 - Garden Club redid Midlothian entrance, putting flagstone and evergreen plantings in place.

- South Sylvan Drive was opened to through traffic from Midlothian to Gilmer.
- Orchestra for the dance cost \$85.
- 1963 - Weekend beach patrol cost \$1.25 per hour.
 - Sewage plant to service Sylvan Lake proposed.
- 1964 - Postcards announcing general meeting cost 2 cents.
 - Bruce Muench, area fish biologist, states "Bass were emaciated, 50% bluegills emaciated, pumpkin seeds in thin condition and carp apparently in good condition."
 - Big discussions on Schwerman Park drainage at annual meeting.
 - Stocking of bass & bluegill recommended.
 - From a beach report written by Bob Bull. "Oh, what would we do without the ladies! Beach cleaned, sand spread, trash disposed, rotted timbers replaced—all under their stern direction. Bicycle racks have been added, too. Yes to the ladies of our Garden Club to the laurels—they do 70% of the actual work and 100% of the 'bossing' for a mean average of 85%. Girls, thanks, it sparkles."
- 1965 - Garden Club installed first volleyball—badminton nets at Schwerman park.
- 1966 - Mosquito abatement programs started. (lasted 2 years)
 - Telephone poles and gravel placed by beach for safer parking.



Schwerman family in 1920's
L to R: A.G., Lillian, Marion, Carl, Earl, Pauline, Esther



A page from A.G. Schwerman & Co's ledger.



View of Gilmer, looking south on Gilmer Rd.; A.G. Schwerman's store was on left side.

- Garden Club proposed & funded junk pick-up.
- Mr. Fain reported, "The sump pump took care of water at Schwerman Park successfully during two recent heavy rains."
- 1969 - Sewers installed and road terrible for two years.
 - Garden Club started a clean-up day and purchased sand for the beach.
- 1970 - Special gen. meeting assessed \$15 for fish kill.
 - Fish kill was 98% effective with 10,000 bluegills and 5,100 bass stocked.
 - Garden Club request \$2 per household to pay for beach patrol on week-ends.
- 1971 - Tennis court cost estimated at \$9,300.
 - Garden Club organized a tree planting project.
 - Annual meeting postcard notice - 6 cents each.
- Dues at \$30.
- Sylvan Smile newsletter started.
- Garden Club reported 100 trees planted.
- 1972 - First discussions of lake aerators.
 - Association, under John Chesney, assumed the clean-up responsibility from Garden Club who continued the leaf raking.
 - Speed bumps were discussed.
 - Don Bjorklund organized the construction of 243 feet of new curb at beach.
 - Discussed the need to bury drainage hose in Schwerman Park.
 - More discussions of Sylvan Lake incorporation.
 - More discussion regarding burying piping at Schwerman park.



Sledding down the "Hill".

- 1973 - Hose will be buried by hand when ground thaws.
 - Basketball courts proposed with potential for a tennis court.
 - Newcomers dance cost \$5 per couple.
 - Hose will be buried when ground dries.
 - Eighty couples attended dance.
 - Pipe in Schwerman Park will be buried.
 - Use of electric motors in lake voted down.
 - The first Shoreline announced a fishing derby.
 - Special general meeting: Pipe in Schwerman to be buried; \$502 profit from Newcomer dance to go towards basketball court at Community (Bjorkland) Park; Metal building approved for beach.
 - Lee "Carp" Dickinson snagged 31 bluegills in fishing derby. Scott Hanson caught 56 fish. In total 367 were taken.
- Basketball court poured at Schwerman Park and a beach building constructed.
- 1974 - Old boat house dismantled.
 - Hawthorn Woods expressed desire to annex Countryside and Sylvan Lakes before Mundelein annexes. Tax basis would be 99 cents for Mundelein and 48 cents for Hawthorn Woods.
 - Decision to have mini fish kill to reduce bluegills.
 - Playground equipment at Schwerman updated.
 - Guest speaker at annual meeting discussed the Hwy 53 extension.
- 1975 - Pipe at Schwerman will be buried.
 - First clean-up day with free refreshments.
 - Bjorkland Park named after Don for all of his selfless community efforts.



Ice skating



Kurt Koppitz and Walst Connell, above and Louise Koppitz below bringing home groceries after a big snow in the 1940's

- Basketball court poured at Schwerman.
- Organized volleyball starts.
- 220 fish taken in 4th of July fishing derby.
- First Oktoberfest held. Brats were 80 cents and beer was 40 cents. Two kegs of beer were consumed. Bitter cold. Dan Kaloway installed a light for the occasion. Trees were planted at park earlier in day.

1976 - Garden Club sell Sylvan Lake Patches to make money.

- Bicentennial Dance considered a huge success with 116 tickets sold.
- Clean-up day and fishing derby held together.
- Portable tables purchased from Lion's Club.
- Bicentennial Labor Day gala a huge success.
- Garden Club President becomes a voting member of the Association Board.
- Dues raised to \$40.
- Second Oktoberfest only lost \$13 compared to \$100 from the first one.

1977 - Special meeting raised dues to \$50.

- First mention of proposed garbage dump.



The local hockey game at its best!

1978 - Garden Club prepared a telephone book.
- Three boys bid to cut the grass at beach/parks.

1979 - Committees set to pursue lake dredging.

- First annual winter carnival.
- Flouride added to lake wells.
- Garbage landfill turned down by EPA.
- Seawalls proposed for Juneau and Wildflower terraces.
- Aerators authorized at annual meeting and proposal for bay dredging presented.
- Sylvan Lake streets paved by Township.

1980 - Garden Club was reactivated with project to update the phone book.

- A special assessment of \$150 for bay excavation was approved by a vote of 56-38 at a special meeting.
- Shed built to dampen noise of aerator compressors.
- Volleyball playoffs were a real big success and also included an ice cream social sponsored by the Garden Club.
- Dredging estimated to cost \$15,785.



Santa is always a treat for the kids of Sylvan Lake!

- Special meeting to vote on dredging. In attendance were 83 residents. A motion to abandon project was made, defeated by a show of hands.

1981 - A new well installed in Sylvan Commons.

- Late spring excavation meeting reports 90% completion with the lake level back up.
- Garden Club getting new benches.

1982 - Northerns placed in lake.

1983 - Cable TV comes to Sylvan Lake.

- Seawall constructed in Maple Terrace.
- Dues kept at \$50.

1984 - Work has begun on by-law revisions.

1985 - Dues raised to \$60.

- Garden Club plants 100 bulbs and plans to purchase a new bench.

1986 - Old Fashioned Winter Skating Party at rink in front of the Tonkery's.

- Eagle Scouts began several major projects.
- Dues raised to \$100.

1987 - A very successful Winterfest included tennis ball golf and softball on the ice.



"Venetian Night" finds costumes and decorated boats as the Sylvan Lake residence get together for another community event!

1988 - The spring dance was a great success and raised over \$400 for new playground equipment.

- Point Comfort Park playground equipment was built over four weekends.

- First Carp-a-rama held in conjunction with clean-up.

- New benches were installed at beach.

- Scouts start major effort at Ravinia Park which will include a major seawall structure, foot paths and bridges.

1989 - Talk of incorporation with Gilmer begins.

- A dinner cruise on Lake Geneva was enjoyed by about 40 residents.

1990 - Trees donated by the Benedek's were planted by Eagle Scout candidates throughout the community parks.

- Association passes 50 year milestone.

- A pier was installed at Ravinia park.

- A new playground is constructed at Schwerman Park over 4 weekends.

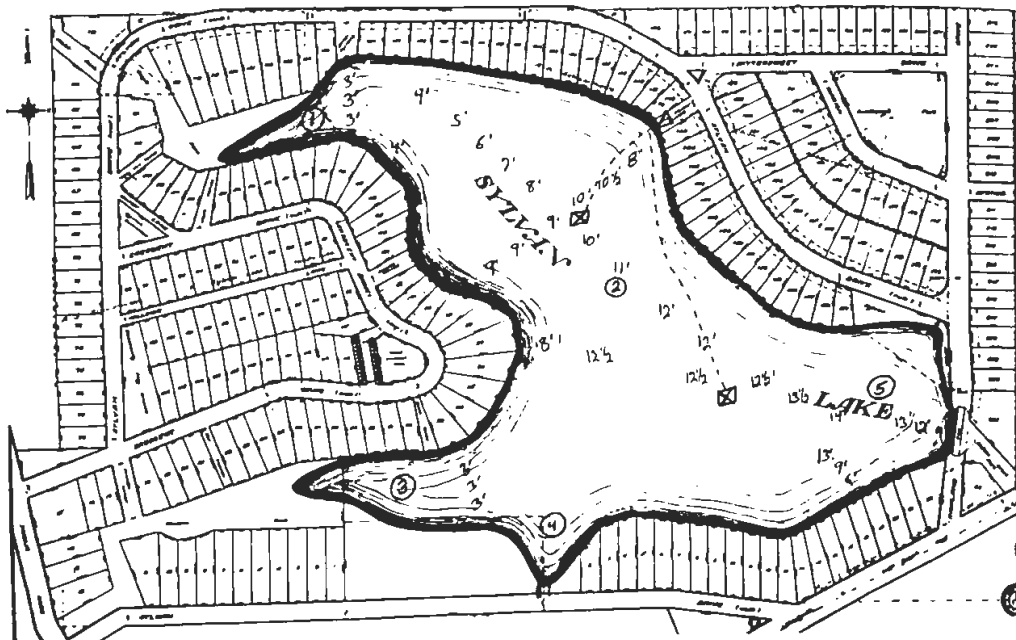
- The first Chili Cook-off brought a new twist to the Winterfest activities.

1991 - Fish committee established to monitor and improve lake quality. Fish cribs constructed and placed on ice for spring thaw.

- Numerous discussions regarding the drainage hose at Schwerman Park took place over several years. There were many good intentions to remedy the situation. The most effective one occurred without anyones knowledge. It was never buried. It just disappeared.



Some of our other neighbors that we share our lake with.



Map of Sylvan Lake with property lines.



Hot air balloons over the lake.



Mustachio! Sylvan Lake - a nice place to raise a mustache!
Front row: Stan Rak, George Hamilton, Carl Pearson, back row
Rich Borst, John Zenner Jr.



One of the greatest winter activities for the kids is sledding down the hills and onto the lake.



Sailboats on the lake have been a special treat for those who like to sail and for those that just like to watch!