

Larkin, Larry

Start With A Dream . . . Watch It Sail Into Print

by MARLENE KASTEN

The interest of a lifetime, work of more than one year and linked to today with more than 1,000 telephone calls is the story behind the first book by Larry Larkin, entitled "Full Speed Ahead."

The book records the elegant steamboat era of Lake Geneva which began in 1870 with the building of two large sailing vessels to meet the increasing need for water transportation on the Lake . . . to the era's decline in 1915 from the popularity of another form of transportation . . . the automobile.

Through records and many pictures, Larkin traced this particular period in the region's unique history, retracing in some instances with the assistance of several Lake Geneva historians.

As Elmhurst and many Tree Town suburbs claimed early homeowners included Chicagoans who escaped from the humid city each summer for their 'cottages' in the suburbs,

some prominent Chicagoans hopped aboard the Chicago and North Western Railroad which by July 6, 1871, was open to Lake Geneva and their estates. . . . In 1888 the railroad lines extended to Williams Bay through Genoa Junction.

At the time of the Chicago fire homes in Lake Geneva were opened to friends and relations left homeless by the fire as were the suburban communities like Elmhurst.

The railroad brought many visitors to the lake resort and by 1890, a steam fleet of 30 large crafts and many smaller ones indicated a special elegance was to pass in review with the 'Gay 90's.

Larkin introduced the steamboat builders, explained their construction and the pride of their owners. Races developed as the trains brought the families to the shores of Lake Geneva. The private steamers met the owners as they stepped from the trains and sailed them to their homes.

The steamboats . . . brass railed, mahogany finished excursion boats also provided special settings for teas and outings.

Larkin explained his reasons for the book with a poem "For Childhood's opening bloom, For sportive youth to stray in, For manhood to enjoy his strength, and Age to wear away in."

The author is the son of Mrs. George Larkin of Elmhurst, and the late Mr. Larkin. He was graduated from York in 1955, continued his education at Northwestern university and teaches physics at Evanston high school. He credits his first thoughts about writing "Full Speed Ahead" to his first ride aboard the Doreen 25 years ago, but found the idea really took shape one sunny morning last July and wouldn't let him go until he started to do something about it.

Those who treasure history or like sailing or just to look at pictures of boats will enjoy "Full Speed Ahead."