



JACKLUKES

THE FATHER OF SHOW SKIING

It was the spring of 1947 in the small village of Biron Wisconsin when the sport of amateur show ski competition was born. Biron is a small community adjacent to the North East border of Wisconsin Rapids on the East bank of the Wisconsin River. It was there on an island, leased from Consolidated Papers located in the middle of the river, which was home to the Central Boaters Club. The Central Boaters Club was made up of families from the local communities who wanted to get together and enjoy the beauty and recreation the Wisconsin River had to offer. One of the members of that club who is known to most show skiers today was that of 16-year-old Jack Lukes.

As time progressed, a few of the teen-age members, Jack included, decided they would like to try the sport of water skiing. They began skiing in front of the island where the boat club parked their boats. The recreational skiing continued until 1957. In 1958, these kids put on their first official water ski show making \$150. It was also about that time when some of the parents expressed their dislike in the fact that the older members were skiing where the younger kids were swimming.

In the fall of 1959 and into the spring of 1960, a group of these skiers decided to move their show ski operation from the Central Boaters Club area. They left the island and moved to the south shore of the river to start a water ski club. The Wisconsin Rapids Aqua Skiers were born and to this day practice and perform on the same site.

When the Aqua Skiers Inc. decided to elect their first board of directors, their first President was Jack Lukes. Jack's family had been active with the Central Wisconsin Boaters Club and had now shifted their focus to the Aqua Skiers. Throughout the years, Jack's father John was active in the club as an announcer while Jack and his younger brother Bill skied and performed. Bill's son, Daren (Jack's nephew) began skiing with the club at age 7 and until 2004, his wife Holly, sons Tyler and Cody and daughter Macey also skied with the club.

In 1965, Jack was very active in judging three event tournaments. Allen and Nancy Bubolz were Jack's mentors in 3-event judging. Allen, who was the Executive Vice President of the Mid-west Region of the American Water Ski Association, asked Jack if the club would consider joining the AWSA. Jack told Allen that at this time, the club could not do that. In the 60's the only kind of water ski tournaments held were three event (slalom, trick and jump). These tournaments were for individual competition and not team competitions. One of the challenges with this type of tournament is that it is a large expense for families to have their kids compete.

In the winter of 1966-1967, Jack approached Alan with a suggestion that they create a discipline for non-tournament skiers and Alan in return suggested Jack come up with some ideas. Jack sat down with his pencil and wrote the first rules for the Water Ski Show Tournament. The father of show skiing was born. Jack's original set of rules consisted of only one page. After completing his rough draft, Jack sent copies of

his proposal to Alan Bubolz, Tom Ghiloni (NSSA President as of this writing) and Lenore Crothers, now Lenore Haferman, who had just skied for Tommy Bartlett at the New York Worlds fair. Jack requested that each person review the proposed rules and let him know what they thought of them. Lenore was the only one who responded to the proposed rules and said, "Jack, they look good. Let's go for it." And the show tournament was born. Those rules like them or not, include some of the very items used in today's scoring system which include, flow, execution, difficulty, spectator appeal and the box scores.

In the spring of 1967 Jack asked the Aqua Skiers if they would run this tournament and they consented to doing so. Jack also asked the Wisconsin Water Ski Federation if they could use their name and call the tournament the Wisconsin State Water Ski Show Tournament. The federation board of directors agreed to allow the Aqua Skiers to do so. The very first Wisconsin State Water Ski Show Tournament was held in the summer of 1967 in the town of Rudolph, on the north bank of the Wisconsin River directly across from the Aqua Skiers current site. The tournament was held with seven competing clubs from around the state. Jack was the first Water Ski Show Tournament Chairman and held that position for almost 11 years. The original judges for the tournament were: Jack - Chief Judge, Allen Bubolz, Nancy Bubolz, Lenore Crothers and Vern and Dorothy Zickuhr from Iowa were the scoring judges.

The tournament has moved around a bit since the first show. It went from the north side of the river to the south side and then down to Lake Camelot south of Wisconsin Rapids. After spending a few years at Lake Camelot, the tournament moved back North to Lake Wazeecha. The tournament then moved to the famous Red Sands Beach of Lake Wazeecha where it is still held to this day.

In 1965, a man by the name of Phil Franke had an idea to start a Mid-Winter Convention. Phil was a member of the Min-Aqua Bats from Minocqua, WI. Back then the Min-Aqua Bats, in a sense, became inactive in the winter. Phil asked Jack if he would help organize the Mid-Winter Convention, which was held at the Paper Inn in Port Edwards. The Paper Inn was a restaurant located in the lower level of the YMCA and the Mid-Winter Convention was what we now know as Think Tank or the Wisconsin Water Ski Convention and Expo.

In 2001, a group of Aqua Skiers were setting up for the Wisconsin State Show Tournament, and as Aqua Skiers are bred to do, they were brainstorming. How can we honor the man who made possible what we have today? How about presenting Jack with an award in his honor? Have it be an award that was not suggested or started by Jack, but one that honors a man who has spent the last 55 years of his life devoted to the sport of water skiing. The Jack Lukes Best Male Skier Award was presented to Jack at the 2001 Wisconsin State Water Ski Show Tournament during the awards ceremony. Jack has never been a man who looks for the spotlight. He is a very humble man who does his best to look out for the best interest of the whole group and not just himself. His satisfaction always came from the smiles he could create. Upon receiving this honor Jack quoted Bill Clifford, a former Executive Director of AWSA and said; "Water skiing is made up of two things, people and fun." Troy Oleson of the Wisconsin Rapids Aqua Skiers was the first proud recipient of that award.

The tournament has evolved over the years and tournament chairmen have changed but one thing is certain, the roots of all Water Ski Show Tournaments can be traced back to Jack Lukes. Jack has never been married; water skiing has been his life and He has devoted it to our sport and especially to the Wisconsin region.