

Huron skier slaloms to Canada and back

By PAUL MODERACKI

HURON — Bathers and fishermen who saw a water skier on a lone ski in the Sodus Point harbor last Friday afternoon and head north to have waited four hours for his return — if they'd known where he was going.

But Frank Monje and his two companions in an 18 foot Starcraft penbow outboard didn't tell anyone outside of neighbors on Bonnie Castle Road in the Town of Huron where he was going, because he wasn't that sure he could do it.

But he did. In a little under four hours Monje rode his 20 year old water ski to the point lighthouse, on the Canadian side of the Lake Ontario, and returned to the Sodus lighthouse without stopping or falling from the ski.

His companions on the round trip were James Dendecker, the owner of the Starcraft, and Jack Lunay, who went along as navigator, to lend moral support, and to fish Monje out of the lake if he fell. Lunay never should have worried about Monje fall-

ing, but Monje also says he never could have accomplished the feat without the confidence the other two men gave him throughout the trip.

Monje, 47, a bachelor, says the idea to try the round trip had its origins four years ago when he was told it was "impossible" to go from Pultneyville to the Sodus Point lighthouse on one ski without falling. He took the dare, and not only made the trip east, but turned around and completed the 22 mile trip.

He says to this day he's only regretted the bet for one reason — the other person who made the dare has never paid up, though that might be understandable because the payoff is dinner for nine at "Surf and Turf."

Once he made the Pultneyville to Sodus Bay round trip, Monje said he became hooked and started looking around for "something greater." Once last year, and several times this year

for conditioning, he made round trips on the ski to Oswego and back.

He says once he had the Oswego trip under his lifebelt he had the stamina for the "trip that was in my mind all along — Point Petre Lighthouse and return." He says he wanted to do the trip last year, and almost went across, but it never came off because the man who owned the boat backed off from the trip at the last moment.

This year everything came together. Monje found Dendecker, a Newark bar owner who recently bought a cottage on the Bonnie Castle Road, and Lunay to make the trip with him.

Why did Monje do it? Simply put, he says all he wanted to do was "get out there and ski where there was no land around me." In the process the boat and skier skimmed over the deepest part of the lake (119 fathoms),

through all the boat lanes without seeing a single freighter, and hit the Canadian lighthouse head on.

Monje says hitting the lighthouse after two hours of pounding by two and three foot waves in the middle of the lake was just the lift he needed for the return. He says he would have been satisfied with a one way trip the first time, but decided he'd try both legs upon spotting the point.

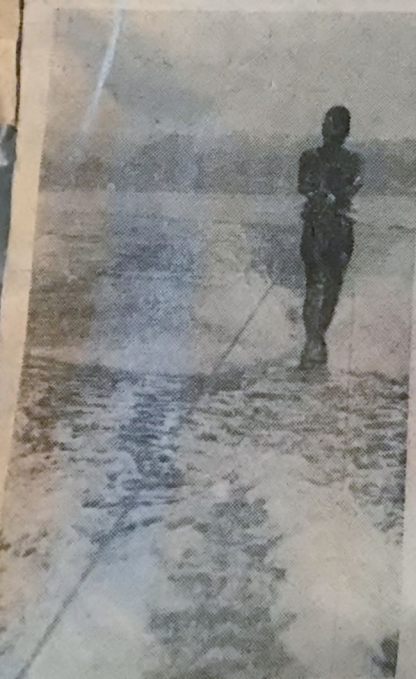
On the return leg the wind swung around from its southeast heading to due east. The water grew choppy, and Monje says there were white caps in several places. The wind and drift from the lake forced the boat off course, and it ended up coming across at Pultneyville, then had to swing back to Sodus Bay. Because of the

error, Monje logged a 90 mile round trip, instead of the 80 miles he'd planned.

Dendecker said the boat crew took as much of a beating in the boat as Monje out on the lake. He said the boat actually got off course because of the continual pounding of the waves, which made the boat's compass "spin like a top."

Dendecker said they outfitted the 120 horse power boat with 20 gallons in addition to its normal 18-gallon capacity.

Monje says he "was the most tired in my whole life when I got off the ski" late Thursday afternoon, but he says he'll never live to regret the trip because "we beat the lake on its own ground."



Monje skiing in Sodus Bay



Map shows Frank Monje's route across Lake Ontario



D&C photos by Paul Moderacki
James Dendecker, left, and Monje with 20-year-old ski