

by Otto Ringle

Do you ever receive notices or calls from the unknown? Perhaps from your Mom or Dad who have passed? Or perhaps from a close personal friend?

The other day I received a call from Ken Bresley, the guy whose picture is at right. I was extremely honored to consider this guy a personal friend, as he was a captain in the Vietnam War, earned a Purple Heart, Silver Star, Bronze Star with one Oak Leaf Cluster and was also an Aide-de-Camp to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara during the Johnson Administration.

In 1978, Ken moved to Walker and established the Tackle Box on main street. Throughout his many years in Walker, Ken was also involved with Dahlem's Restaurant, Grandma Goldie's, the State Theater, Village Motors and Village Homes. He was also active in St. Agnes Catholic Church, the Knights of Columbus, the Walker VFW Post 2701 and the Walker American Legion Post 134. Ken also served on the Shingobee Township Board, the Walker City Council and today, the Walker Municipal Airport Bresley Field is named after Airport Commissioner Bresley.

It was only one year after moving to Walker when



**Ken Bresley, the founder of the International Eelpout Festival.** Photo submitted

Ken and a few of his buddies were down at the Legion Club wondering what they could do to liven up the streets of Walker during the long winter months. All the surrounding towns already had fishing contests, but none of them had a contest for fishing for the ugly, squirming, slippery, slimy eelpout.

The event, however, turned out to be much more than a fishing contest — it was a fun-filled weekend of helicopter rides, polar plunges, bikini shows, ice-sculpturing, golf, curling, beer-drinking contests, slip-and-fall-on-the-ice dancing, music and mayhem!

Jim and Barb Aletto, who owned the Chase Hotel at the time, hosted a black-tie champagne dinner out on the ice, where one could sit on very comfortable furniture and en-

joy classical chamber music.

Our family had a restaurant on main street called the Goalpost, which is now called Benson's. Just west of Aletto's very formal festival, we painted a huge target on the ice. My fellow dentist, Byron Hoffman had two sons. One flew an airplane over the huge target on the ice, while the other parachuted down toward the target.

Onlookers would place their bets on the target — guessing where the parachute would land. A few others actually fished for the elusive, wiggly, slimy fish, and prizes were given to the individual who caught an eelpout measured in pounds, and also to teams of fishermen who caught many fish measured in tons.

All in all it was truly a fun-filled event! It was fun just go down on the ice and people watch. From rugged-looking, bearded men sporting full animal pelts on their heads to ladies walking around in shorts, midriff shirts and snow boots, the event proved a general, all-around sense of on-the-ice camaraderie.

The crazy, chaotic and oftentimes confusing event was featured on the Tonight Show and CNN! However, just the other day, a headline in the New York Times read, "Popular Northern Minnesota Fishing Contest Cancelled."

This is when I received a call from Ken. "This is a no-brainer!" Ken emphatically stated with an obvious tone of knowing what he was talking about. "Cass County is upset because the mess the fishermen leave and the money they have to spend pulling vehicles out of the water. It's a no-brainer, move the event into town, keep vehicles off the ice — snowmobiles only. Mandate every business has at least two garbage cans in front of their business and they are responsible for keeping the town clean! It's a no-brainer!" Ken repeated.

The Chamber and the City Council has it covered Ken! Monday, business people met at the Chamber and discussed plans for a Frozen Block Party. Personally, I liked your idea of the International Eelpout Festival Ken, but we'll see what happens!