

Greg Bolinski is probably one of the few people who make the jump from the known into the unknown in order to live their dream. A trip to a Canadian fishing camp back in the late 1990's left a lasting impression on him so much so that he decided he would like to pursue owning and operating his own lodge up in Canada.

Even though he was a successful Lease Manager for Sprint, the Milwaukee native who was living in Kenosha at the time decided that the "normal" corporate life was not necessarily the end-all-be-all when it came to his career. Apparently a lot of people share the dream owning their own Canadian lodge, but few actually go onto to pursue it.

"99 percent of guys who go up there talk about buying a place. Only about .099 percent actually go through with it"; said Bolinski.

Workforce reductions at Sprint in 2002 pushed him out of corporate America. However, he became one of that tiny percentage who fulfill their dream of lodge ownership when he purchased Agate Bay Lodge on Pagwachuan Lake back in 2003. Located in the providence of Ontario, this lodge was found after searching for a suitable and affordable location for the previous 4 years.

Bolinski who runs the camp by himself, begins his day at 6am with the starting of the generator that supplies electricity to the camp and ends his day by turning off the generator at midnight. He spends much of his time in between taking care of his customers and performing various lodge work that includes things like cleaning cabins, mowing the lawn, taking garbage to the dump and performing maintenance on whatever needs repair. That repair work includes fixing anything from roofs and docks to boat motors.

"I was never that good of a mechanic, but I got a lot better at it. If it's broke, either I fix it or it doesn't get fixed"; said Bolinski.

He added that the two myths of owning a lodge are that you make a lot of money and you get to spend all day fishing. While he doesn't spend as much time fishing as people think, he does get out to fish more than most people and he certainly loves fishing.

He grew up with that love to fish and others in his family share the love for the outdoors. This is certainly evidenced in that his son Mike currently attends UW Stevens Point with the goal of becoming a fisheries biologist.

For Bolinski though, the best part of owning a lodge is not in the chance for extra fishing time for himself; it is the interaction with people who he says are "generally having their best week of the year". He has a number of repeat customers and has developed a friendship with many of them.

He believes that communication with current and potential customers is important. He suggests that if you are attempting to contact a lodge operator and they don't get back to you promptly, that you should think twice about booking with that lodge.

“If you send an operator and email and they don’t get back to you promptly, then don’t expect them to be better in person”; said Bolinski.

Most of his customers come from the United States and they generally are there to fish for walleye although many are happy just as long as they are catching anything. He finds his customers are as much interested in the scenery and tranquility as they are in the actual fishing.

Pagwachuan Lake and surrounding waters do provide the typical Canadian fishing experience with better opportunities for catching walleye, lake trout, northern pike, brook trout, whitefish, perch and burbot than one generally gets here in the U.S. Small game and waterfowl hunts are also available.

From May through September he lives at and runs the lodge which is located about 12 hours from Kenosha. The rest of the year, he generally lives somewhere in Southeastern Wisconsin most often working various positions in the telecom industry. This year he put his accounting degree to work by doing taxes, though he admits that accounting work is at the bottom of things he actually likes to do.

Thankfully for Bolinski, accounting is only a small part of owning and running his lodge; his dream job.

Those interested in booking in renting a cabin at Agate Bay Lodge can contact Greg Bolinski at 262-770-0202 or go to his website at www.agatebaylodge.com.

Terry Bitz