Diamond Bits
by Marv Kohlbek

Much could be written about the USA (United Special Sportsmen Alliance) event that was held at Normington's marsh, west of City Point, on Saturday, July 16, 2005. For those in attendance the picture I captured here reveals only one of the highlights of the day.

But first, a little background.

John Olig, program chairman of Pittsville Lions invited Bridgid O'Donoghue, president of USA as guest speaker to a Lions dinner meeting last year. Her presentation was outstanding as she told of the efforts of her organization and sponsors to work with handicapped and terminally ill kids that longed for participation in outdoor sports.

Knowing that Lions efforts also deal with people having handicaps she challenged the Pittsville Lions to team up with her organization to help with the outdoor water sporting event set for Saturday, July 16. Our challenge? Prepare food for about 300 people. Most of the food would be donated or paid for by sponsors.

We Lions were able to line up experienced guys like Verlen and Lee McDonald and Scott Fuller to provide a good old Wisconsin meal of barbequed hog. Lions members prepared brats, hamburgers, wiener, beans, corn on the cob, and melons to complete the meals for the day. People came from Georgia, Alabama, Kansas, Illinois and from all over Wisconsin. There was no shortage of food and some families were able to go home with leftovers.

Kids in wheelchairs, on crutches or mobile enough to get around had the opportunity to enter a fishing contest, target shoot with bow and arrow, ride horseback or participate in many water activities.

Displays by the Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association attracted attention as Bridgid and her organization provide guides and trips to other states so that kids can have the experience of a lifetime, not only in fishing but also in hunting deer, bear, elk, geese and turkey.

Randy Oltner, world champion bow hunter, holder of 17 national titles traveled from Plainville, Illinois to put on a masterful trick show performance by splitting candy lifesavers on various animal targets. He didn't appear to be 25 years old but hosts a TV show entitled, "Through the Eyes of a Young Hunter". He too was a crowd favorite.

Representation of the Georgia Safari Club International (a hunting club) and Pro-Cats (catfish club) of Illinios were on hand to also provide assistance in their nationwide endeavor to aid the less fortunate.

Mr. Denny Halgren, left, in picture, a member and officer of the catfish club is shown holding the casting rod for Ryan Novy of Kendall, WI who netted an 18" catfish during the fishing contest held Saturday at Normington's. Ryan has Downs Syndrome, but had this day turn into complete happiness as he netted the largest fish of the day.

Besides witnessing the accomplishment of Ryan Novy I had the opportunity to visit with Tony Bundy of Eau Claire. Tony is 14 years old and totally blind. Even though he uses a white cane to get around his younger brother Joe assisted him with his fishing. He was not disappointed that he did not catch a fish. He was more than happy to tell of his success in the past in shooting an elk, a bear, and a goose. Naturally he had the assistance of a guide on his successful hunting safaris. When asked about turkey hunting he thought he did not get one because his guide flinched and scared the turkey away.

After this week Tony Bundy can add to his stories as he is scheduled to attend the Wisconsin Lions Camp for visually handicapped where many more experiences abound.

As Pittsville Lions, the Tony Bundy experience will never be forgotten as we expect to visit with Tony and others this Sunday which is Lions Day at the camp in Rosholts.

Won't be surprised when Pittsville Lions, including Bridgid O'Donoghue, approach him and talk about both organizations yoking together last Saturday to support the wishes of young people like him.