

They decided the best thing for them was a break. OK, so it lasted 2 1/2 years, but the Violent Femmes are back with a new LP. Find out above the group's revival in Street Beats, 3D.

STREET SCENE

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★ ★ 10

A winter 'madness'



The frozen expanse of Houghton Lake becomes a haven for snowmobilers during Tip-Up-Town.

photos by DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Surviving at Tip-Up-Town U.S.A.

By Bill Parker
staff writer

... His fingers numb from the icy-cold water, Redford's Lawrence Novak reaches back into the freezing waters of Houghton Lake and retrieves his fishing line. He pulls a 19-inch northern pike up through the hole in the ice, smiles, admires the fish, then returns it to the wintery waters since the fish was an inch short of the 20-inch legal minimum size.

... His face covered with whipped cream, Southfield's Corey Taylor continues his assault on the chocolate cream pie. Standing on stage, without hat or gloves, Taylor is oblivious to the single-digit temperatures being recorded on this sunny afternoon. He's too busy winning the pie-eating contest to notice.

... Their cheeks dried and chapped from the elements, Mary and Matt Rons of Livonia zip up their snow suits, mount their snowmobiles, and speed off down the lake. They don't even seem to notice stinging winter winds. These are the participants and this is Tip-Up-Town U.S.A.

DESPITE UNSEASONABLY cold conditions on opening weekend, visitors to Tip-Up-Town U.S.A. 1989 didn't mind. They were having too much fun at northern

Michigan's most popular winter festival.

"I just came up here to enjoy myself," said Novak, who was at the opening weekend of this year's Tip-Up-Town, Jan. 21-22, with his wife, Peggy, and his son, Jason. "I came up here with my dad, when I was a kid, a long time ago. I always wanted to come back. This is the second year I've been back in recent years. I like to see all the machines (snowmobiles) and talk with the people. Everyone is friendly. It's a lot of fun."

Joe Taylor, who was at the festival with his wife, Lauren, and his son, Corey (the pie eater), agrees.

"We have friends with a cabin on the lake, so we came up for the weekend to (ride) snowmobiles and enjoy the festivities," Taylor said. "We're having a lot of fun. There

are a lot of machines and a lot of friendly people. It's not too cold if you dress for it."

TIP-UP-TOWN U.S.A. is held annually the last two weekends of January on Houghton Lake, in central northern Michigan. This year, better than 50,000 visitors celebrated the 39th anniversary of the festival, which began in 1951 strictly as a fishing tournament.

"It all began, years ago, when some local businessmen wanted to do something to drum up some business for the winter," explained Gary Piche, of the Houghton Lake Chamber of Commerce. "Originally, it was just a fishing tournament. (Which is where the name came from, since a tip-up is a self-supported fishing pole used for ice fishing.)"

"But the main concept, right from the start, was just to have a good time. It certainly has grown. Now we average between 30,000 and 50,000 (visitors) over the two-weekend carnival. It's one of the top 10 winter carnivals in the nation."

WITH A WIDE variety of activities, Tip-Up-Town U.S.A. is truly a winter festival that can be enjoyed by the entire family.

Children can play on a giant ice slide; participate in any of the countless games, directed by the Tip-Up-Town staff of volunteers; enter a pie-eating contest; see a puppet show, clown act or magic act; ride a 40-foot ferris wheel or go fishing, cross country skiing or snowmobiling.

Other activities for adults include demo rides on four-wheelers and snowmobilers; a Las Vegas Night party; ski races, even dance contests, held daily in the huge beverage tent. There are also fireworks, helicopter rides, hang glider demonstrations, a parade (this year's Grand Marshall was former baseball great Sparky Lyle), booths and various demonstrations.

IF SNOWMOBILING is the preferred activity, Houghton Lake itself covers more than 20,000 acres

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The carnival atmosphere takes on a state fair look with one exception — snowmobile suits instead of shorts.

Warp Factor

Karlos Barney



"Believe in hell? Of course I do — I'm tortured by cellulite, my Sharpey is shedding, and I just discovered I'm allergic to sushi!"

This is fishing?

By Bill Parker
staff writer

Let's say you've never been ice fishing.

A friend asks you to go to some place called Tip-Up-Town U.S.A. for the weekend and give the sport a chance. He explains the process of digging holes through the ice, setting your tip-ups and then hanging out in the middle of the lake, sometimes all day long, (although some people drive right out on the ice and sit in their cars) waiting for this little red flag to pop up on your tip-up, signaling a fish is on your line.

Then the fun starts. You pull the line in, bare handed, of course, remove the fish while your fingers rapidly become numb, then start the process all over again.

You'd probably look that person in the eye and tell him he's crazy, right? What could be fun about that? Sounds cold and boring, right?

Wrong! Just ask Randy Ruggero. RUGGERO, 32, who lives in Ad-

dison Township (north of Rochester) went up to Houghton Lake recently, where Tip-Up-Town is held annually. He went with his neighbor, Jim Tallasero. It was the first trip to Tip-Up-Town for both men.

"Jim wanted to go up, and at the last minute the person he was going up with couldn't make it," explained Ruggero. "I had never been ice fishing, but I went with him so he could still go and to keep him company. Since I was up there, I decided I might as well fish too, so I bought a one-day (fishing) license."

That license was probably the best investment Ruggero has ever made.

Just after sunset, on the first day of the festival, Ruggero caught a huge northern pike.

"EVERYTHING WAS against me to catch that fish," explained Ruggero. "I wasn't even fishing for a pike. I had a small hook and a little minnow. We were fishing for crappie or perch."

"When it came up, it was all

pike. It was a monster. We were worried it wouldn't make it through (the hole in the) ice. When I got it about six inches up through the hole, Jim grabbed it so the line wouldn't break."

The fish later weighed 15-pounds 11-ounces and measured 39-inches long. It was the biggest pike taken over the four days of Tip-Up-Town, winning the northern pike division of the fishing tournament.

The victory earned Ruggero a

brand new power auger. It also changed his life a little.

"I've been ice fishing ever since," admitted Ruggero. "I even went out and bought a portable (ice) shanty. I've been out four times already, but I haven't caught anything yet."

Must have been beginner's luck, right? Think about this. Prior to Tip-Up-Town, Ruggero had been fishing one other time and he caught a 38-inch northern then.

Must have been beginner's luck.



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Lawrence Novak, formerly of Redford Township, sets up his tip-up while his wife and son stay in the warm car.