

The Man Who Begat Goose Lake



RICHARD SONGER is a hard-working businessman, non-drinking father of five, and his dream is a year-round camp for young people. (Observer photo)

By LYNNE LUTHER

Richard Songer is a fighter. Goose Lake Park's fiery-tongued owner, blasted by state and local officials for "promoting" heavy drug traffic at the now-infamous rock festival of Aug. 7-9, sat casually and confidently with stockings feet propped on his desk at the Goose Lake Center in Farmington and blasted back.

"The whole thing is a farce," he began. "They're trying to make me a scapegoat for something they can't control themselves," referring to charges by a special state senate investigation committee.

The red-haired, blue-eyed father of five said he never "condoned drugs" nor did he even drink. He said police told him to "play it cool" and that they'd handle policing of the area during the three-day festival. No arrests were to be made inside.

"IT'S THEIR OWN damn fault for broad-

casting that no uniformed police would be inside the grounds," he said.

Songer blamed the Jackson County Sheriff's Department and Sheriff Southworth in particular for issuing "an open invitation" to dope pushers when Southworth said a few days before the festival began his deputies "wouldn't go near the place." State police weren't any better—they asked me for 100 chips to let 100 plain-clothesmen inside to police 75,000 kids.

He said he told the Senate committeemen to stop "sticking their heads in the sand—drugs weren't invented at Goose Lake."

Born in Detroit's Del Ray section in 1935, Songer has all the earmarks of a rough childhood where "we didn't have any parks."

"Hell, I started working when I was 15," Songer roared. At 35, he owns and operates the Portland Construction Co., occupying office space with the Goose Lake Central office in Farmington, and said he's been "fooling around in real estate for the past few years."

He and his family moved to Southfield in 1964.

THE WHOLE IDEA for a mammoth, year-around park came to Songer about 20 years ago and almost materialized in 1960. "But the deal fell through so I just dropped it for awhile until business picked up." Business picked up enough by January of this year for Songer to purchase 390 acres of land in Jackson County and add another 50 acres just recently.

Since January a large sketch of Songer's "baby," Goose Lake Park, has adorned one wall near the entrance to the office building. Songer said he hopes to make it into a "Disneyland-Cedar Point" type park someday.

"We have the Labor Day festival all planned out," Songer explains. "Limiting the show to one day will keep out the riff-raff. We'll have 300 to 400 of our own security people policing the area this time and the police can do what they want."

SONGER INSISTS he lost money on the first rock festival even though total ticket sales brought in close to "a half-million dollars."

"When you figure I put in \$100,000 worth of fence, \$100,000 worth of parking lots and built a \$100,000 stage and add all the other losses, you may find a real tragedy. The park has to operate to pay for itself."

While Songer champions the cause of youth ("I built the park so they'd have a place to go—I don't really need the headache"), he still seems disappointed and at a loss to explain why so many kids "ripped me off."

"We hired 500 kids from this office, trained them for two days before the festival, and by Friday morning there were only 100 left to help with the work."

He blasted so-called free food kitchens set up by Open City, a Detroit-based youth-oriented social service agency. "I closed my own kitchen and told them I'd supply the food for theirs, but by Saturday they were asking for money to buy more food. After the whole thing was over, we found all kinds of food in their tents that had never been given out."

"The great majority of kids are good but they have definite problems," he said.

"THE ONE THING that struck me most was how many kids have no values and no respect for law and order or other people's property."

Would he let his own son go? "My teenagers worked with me during the day and went to the concerts at night," Songer retaliates. He added that mail since the festival has been "beautiful" with anywhere from 50 to 100 letters pouring into the Goose Lake office every day.

"Most are from kids who were there who say it was the best weekend of their lives. One kid said he'd seen more violence at his family picnic than he did at Goose Lake."

Songer labelled press and TV coverage of his festival "sensationalized versions" of what really happened.

"When newsmen came out here Friday they didn't find any riots or commotion or anything else, and reports were good. Then Saturday they started hunting around for something juicy to say and that's when the whole thing was blown out of proportion."

Showing signs of strain during the late night interview in the Goose Lake office, Songer admitted that trash was worse in some places than in others on the festival grounds, but blamed it on the rock music fans' lack of consideration. "There were real people on the perimeter of that park who never left their campsites, still heard the music, and kept the place clean."

Free plastic bags for trash might be given out at the gate to all rock fans at the Labor Day concert that Songer is confident "will come off."

HIS DIE-HARD philosophy may be skyrocketing Songer to hero status among the state's and nation's youth while simultaneously alienating their parents. He continues to blast the Senate investigating committee's contention that drugs can be squelched by squelching Goose Lake.

"I can stop the pushers, but what do I do about the users?" he asked Senate committeemen. "How can you tell me to control drugs when you can't do it yourselves?"

Songer said he understands why the kids of today are so confused when "so is everyone else, especially their so-called leaders."

"Kids see people on ADC (Aid to Dependent Children) and welfare getting something for nothing, not to mention farmers who get paid for not growing any crops."

"They hear the Jackson county court refuse to sign an injunction before the last festival after health officials, the planning commission, board of supervisors and police all OK'd the plans."

"Then Gov. Milliken tells them there may never be another festival again. No wonder their values are screwed up."

The man who successfully fought his way through three lawsuits to make a teenage dream come true has no intentions of giving up now.

"Goose Lake is a hell of a headache," Songer said. "The easiest thing in the world for me would be to give the whole thing up—but that's not going to happen."

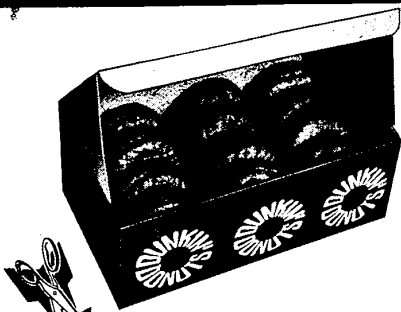
Then Songer dropped his feet from the top of the desk, sat upright and stared straight ahead.

"Goose Lake should be used for what it was intended—a year-around park with concerts, swimming, an amusement park, snowmobiling and tobogganing in the winter and all within one hour's drive of Detroit."

"It's a million-dollar investment for these kids," Songer smiled.

And you get the idea he means to fight.

special special



CLIP
THIS COUPON

and get 18 of the freshest, most delicious home made donuts you ever tasted for the special price of **69¢**

SPECIAL PRICES TO CHURCH GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS!

SPECIAL!
DONUT HOLES
19¢ doz.

VALUABLE COUPON

6 DUNKIN' DONUTS

(Any variety, except fancy)

FREE!

With purchase of one dozen at regular 69¢ price and this valuable coupon.

Good Thurs., Aug. 27 thru Sun., Aug. 30, 1970

DUNKIN' DONUTS



To your home from ours
Fresh every four hours.

27609
Plymouth Rd.
LIVONIA

19010
Middlebelt Rd.
LIVONIA

1625
S. Wayne Rd.
WESTLAND

34417
Ford Rd.
WESTLAND

UM Summer School Is Booming

The University of Michigan enrollment stands at 29,200 this summer, 742 more than a year ago.

The total includes degree, postgraduate-professional and credit extension students. It covers the school term that began in May and ends in August.

"We are pleased with the continued growth of Term III, which permits the greater use of our facilities," said vice president Allan Smith. There are three groups of students during this term: those who attend school the entire summer and those who attend either the spring half or the summer-half of the term. A total of 4,320 enrolled for the entire term, 7,224 for the spring-half and 8,664 for the summer-half, according to Associate Registrar Harris D. Olson.

Here are the current enrollment figures for individual U-M colleges and schools, and last summer's figures:

College of architecture and design, 225, up from 195; school of business administration, 645, up from 609; Dearborn campus, 580, down from 592; school of dentistry, 172, up from 76; school of education, 2,630, down from 2,668; college of engineering, 3,093, down from 3,209.

and observer newspapers, Inc.

CIRCULATION DATA

FRED J. WRIGHT, Circulation Director

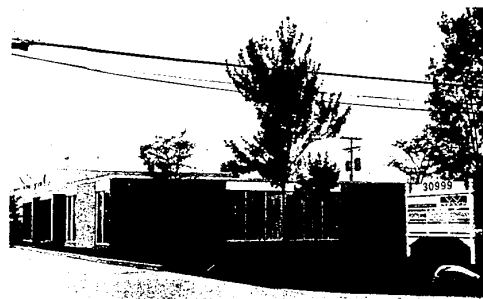
NEWSPAPER

	Current Price Run	CAC Audit Sept. 1968
LIVONIA OBSERVER	29,500	28,208
DEARBORN OBSERVER	20,500	19,206
WESTLAND OBSERVER	10,200	10,200
SOUTHFIELD NEWS	19,500	15,900
FARMINGTON ENTERPRISE	15,200	14,465
ANN ARBOR OBSERVER	11,500	11,007
PLYMOUTH HILL & OBSERVER	10,200	7,266
WEEKLY EDITIONS, WEEKEND EDITION, February		
Ann Arbor, Detroit, Westland, Farmington, Dearborn, Livonia, Southfield	116,400	106,574
Westland	94,900	87,365

FRED J. LEVINE, Advertising Director

Art Langer, Classified Mgr.
422-0900

Joel Stark, Retail Mgr.
422-3175



GOOSE LAKE CENTER shares office space with the Portland Construction Co., at 30999 10 Mile, Farmington. Both are owned by Richard Songer, of Southfield.