

Geneva Lake Water Safety Patrol



(Photo Credit: Geneva Lake Water Safety Patrol)

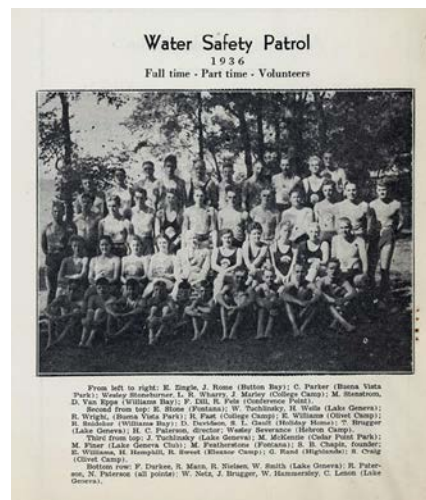
For 95 years, the Patrol has made Geneva Lake safer for the thousands of swimmers and boaters who enjoy the beauty of the lake each summer. The Patrol has grown along with usage of boats and beaches. The Geneva Lake Water Safety Patrol has received national recognition for excellence from both the American Red Cross and the National Safety Council.

Geneva Lake Water Safety Patrol was founded in 1920 by Simeon B. Chapin. He, along with other lake residents, saw a need for an organization that was dedicated to spreading the word about the importance of safety through posters and bulletins posted at area beaches. Incidences of drowning were an all too common occurrence on the lake. The first members of the safety patrol were swim instructors who offered free swimming lessons at various locations around the lake.

By 1925, the Water Safety Patrol began providing lifeguards at Geneva Lake beaches, and the organization purchased its first Patrol boat. The boat was used to expand the lifeguard services, and provide assistance and rescue to an increasing numbers of boaters on the lake. The Water Safety Patrol continued to grow to meet the ever increasing use of the lake.



Play Day Flyer 1936



Water Safety Patrol Staff 1936

H.C. Patterson continued to guide the Patrol through the 1940's and 50's as the Operations Director. Mr. Patterson upgraded the boat fleet to add twin engine vessels with more rescue capabilities.



Dick Scherff

Richard W. (Dick) Scherff, Williams Bay resident and teacher and coach at the high school, took over as Director in the late 1950's and continued to grow the Water Safety Patrol. Under the leadership of Mr. Scherff the staff increased to over 40 people. Mr. Scherff helped the Water Safety Patrol acquire its first fiberglass Patrol boat, a twin-engine inboard 26-ft. Mako in 1976.

In 1979, shortly after responding to a rescue call on Geneva Lake's north shore, Mr. Scherff died after he suffered a heart attack while on duty aboard Boat #1. Boat #1 is named in memory of Richard W. Scherff.

Tom Kwiatkowski stepped in as Director to fill the void left by Scherff's death. Mr. Kwiatkowski added two boats bringing the fleet 5 boats. In addition, Mr. Kwiatkowski took an active role in Patrol fundraising efforts and increased the staff to 60 people. Mr. Kwiatkowski continues to serve The Water Safety Patrol as an active member of the organization's Board of Directors.

Ted Pankau is the current Director, taking over in 1990. The Water Safety Patrol has 6 boats, provides lifeguard services at 13 beaches around the lake. Geneva Lake Water Safety Patrol employs a staff of over 80 people, and offers swimming lessons, boat safety classes, and lifeguard training.

References: Bay Leaves Vol. 3, No. 10 (July 18, 1935), Vol. 4, No. 13 (August 20, 1936), and watersafetypatrol.org.