



# On the Water

Volume 6, Issue 12

December 2004

## The Thorne Bros. Family

from Robert Junghans

“Thorne Brothers.” It has a “family” ring to it, doesn’t it? Originally, it was rod building that got Greg and Paul Thorne started in business 21 years ago. In 1985, they opened their first and only retail store at 7500 University Avenue NE in Fridley, Minnesota. At that time, it catered primarily to fly fisherman. A few years later they added muskie fishing to their product line; quite a leap of faith at that time.

Although it’s been 11 years since anyone named Thorne has been involved in Thorne Bros., Bill Fiebranz and Josh Roundsley, who bought this Mecca for muskie fisherman less than two years ago, believe that a sense of “family” plays a huge part in the success of this unique business.

“When we took over we didn’t lose an employee,” stated Roundsley. “Greg Kaasa (who sold the business to Roundsley and Fiebranz) ran it like a family. He used to tell us he considered us his sons. The loyalty created by treating everyone like family is a major reason for our success.”

Fiebranz has been part of the Thorne Bros. family for ten years, starting in the rod building department after a career in the plastics industry, where he was a quality control supervisor. He quickly graduated to manager of the rod shop, and eventually, to owner.

Roundsley’s career at Thorne Bros. started as a part-time college job. After graduating he left to pursue other interests, but returned in 2001 to become store manager under Kaasa. Two years later, he became an owner.

“We came into this with our eyes wide open,” he says about the venture he and Fiebranz embarked upon with the purchase of the company. “We’d both do it again in a heartbeat, but not with anyone else. We shoot so straight with each other that it can hurt your last feeling, but being open and honest is the only way we know how to do it”.

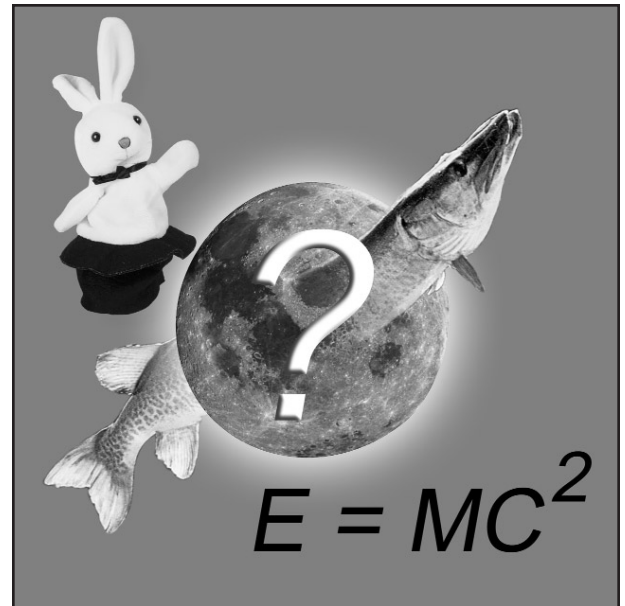
“We work about 12 to 16 hours a day,” added Fiebranz, “but at least as owners we can choose with 12 to 16 hours we work. But we strive to keep things in perspective, too. It’s fishing stuff we’re dealing with here, not making pacemakers; not life and death”.

“We work hard,” Roundsley added, “but you only live once. You better fish hard too”.

This “work hard/fish hard” attitude is apparent from the moment you walk in the door. Their knowledge and passion for what they do is soon equally apparent.

“Customers come in, are helped by one of our sales staff, and they immediately become that customer’s personal expert, sales

**Thorne Bros.** *continued on page 3*



## Poof or Proof?

from Juris Ozols

Is it all magic, like a conjurer pulling a rabbit – Poof! – out of a hat? Or is it provable, scientific fact? I’m going to take a survey, to start with, just to get some background. And then I’m going to do a winter project, an analysis of our own tournament data. We’ll see what comes out of all that, although I’m sure no minds will be changed. And it certainly won’t settle the matter once and for all. But, hey, it’s wintertime and the lakes are ice and unfishable, so this will help pass the time until spring.

What am I babbling about? Well, it’s the age-old questions of whether moon phases affect fishing success, and whether the solunar tables are meaningful. These subjects came up at the “post-meeting” bar discussion following our November chapter meeting. And a variety of opinions were expressed, all in a very friendly interchange.

Now as it happens I have my own opinions, but let me put those aside for the moment. What I would like to do is see how the members of Muskies Inc. feel about all this stuff. Accordingly, I’ve put together

**Poof or Proof?** *continued on page 2*

# From Our President

*I want to thank Will Hardy for his presentation at the November general meeting. Also, for contributing most of the speaker fee back to the chapter, a very generous gesture. Thanks again Will.*

*December marks the end of my last term of my three terms as Twin Cities Chapter president. It has been an honor to serve the chapter at this level and I'll never regret or forget the three years. The friends I've made and the work we accomplished definitely has rewards beyond measure. I would highly recommend service on the board to anyone so you could benefit from the rewards yourself.*

*Many thanks, to those who did serve on the board during my time as president. There is no way that I could have done anything without your presence and friendship. You have my deepest appreciation and respect for your service.*

*Being in the president's chair did bring its ups and downs during my terms, and I want to acknowledge a very special person. Probably the only person who knows the all-in-all of those three years as well as I do. That person would be my wife, Darlene without her support encouragement and understanding I would not have been able to serve as long as I did. Her understanding and acceptance of my, and your affliction (muskie fishing) is incredible to say the least especially since she doesn't even fish.*

*I hope that as I step down that you will find that the club is a little better than when I started or at the very least that I didn't do any harm. Thanks you for the opportunity and experience.*

***Come to meetings; share your stories and ideas.***

**Joe DeMars**

## **Poof or Proof?** *continued from page 1*

a few survey questions to try to get a sense of your opinions. I would appreciate if you could get back to me with responses. I've ginned up some ten statements and for each I would like to have you tell me whether you strongly agree (5) or strongly disagree (1) with that statement.

---

Here's the ten statements:

- 1 The phase of the moon affects the activity level of Muskies.
  - 2 A fisherman is more likely to catch Muskies in certain moon phases than in others.
  - 3 I plan my outings and fish more during the best moon phases than during the worst.
  - 4 I can explain the causal mechanism of how the moon phases affect Muskies.
  - 5 The solunar tables predict the activity level of Muskies.
  - 6 I catch more Muskies during the peak solunar periods than other times.
  - 7 I plan my fishing to coincide with peak solunar periods
  - 8 Muskies are more active under certain barometric conditions than others.
  - 9 Lure color makes a difference.
  - 10 I am familiar with the concept of a controlled, "double blind" experiment.
- 

Again, if you agree strongly with a statement, then give it a "5". If you disagree strongly, give it a "1". Assign a number in the middle of that range to reflect your opinion if it isn't at one of the extremes. A "3" would be no opinion one way or the other.

All I need is a list of the statements – 1 through 10 and a number between 1 to 5 shown for each one. (Although any comments you may have would also be highly appreciated.)

I would like to get responses from as many of you as possible.

You can email me at: [grumpy@minn.net](mailto:grumpy@minn.net)

Or send me a note at: Juris Ozols  
14575 Europa Way  
Apple Valley, MN 55124

I can also get voice messages at: 952-921-6311.

Things have been a bit hectic for me lately (the moon was apparently in Aquarius) but it's settling down and I'll get going on the analysis of the tournament data in December.

And I'll report back to you on the results of the survey and the data analysis before the ice melts. Thanks a lot!

**Bring Your Receipts** Save your receipts from Joe's Sporting Goods, Thorne Bros. Fishing Specialties, or Reed's Sporting Goods. Bring them to the General Meeting and you'll get one free entry in the rod and reel drawing per receipt. Receipts must be dated within 30 days of the meeting.



*Left: Master rod builder Lonnie Murphy plies his craft. Above: Part of the Thorne Bros. "family" (left to right) Brett Erickson, Josh Roundsley, John Nelson, Pat Smith and Luke Ronnestrand.*

### **Thorne Bros.** *continued from p 1*

person, and information source for years," noted Roundsley. "We have people on our staff who are among the best in their field. Lonnie Murphy may be the best rod maker in the country. Brett Erickson has been our buyer for the last 15 years and still continues to keep on top of the newest and hottest products, as well as come up with custom and exclusive baits for us. Our sales staff definitely practices what they preach. Our floor manager, John Nelson, is one of the top money winners in the RCL walleye circuit. Luke Ronnestrand is part owner of Holcombe Tackle that makes the popular Stomper and Lowrider muskie lures. Pat Smith is an Ice Team Power Stick and seems to know just about every lake and puddle in the state. Scott Struif and Chris Hanson have fished for everything, everywhere. They've covered water from northern Alaska to Mexico, Mongolia to the Bahamas, catching everything from Salmon to Yellow fin Tuna, while still finding the time to master muskie, walleye, bass, ice and fly fishing throughout our region. Then there's Matt Thompson. Everyone knows Matt. From seminars to TV to videos, he's done it all- and in his own way! All our sales people spend a lot of time learning the products, and they take a great deal of pride in what they do. They've done it all and seen it all, and literally, there isn't any question they can't answer. On the rare occasion

when a question stumps them, they'll always find the answer for the customer. Put simply, we are the best at what we do".

What Thorne Bros. does is fill very distinct market niches; fly fishing, muskie fishing, ice fishing, and electronics, with a significant dose of custom rod building underlying the entire operation to level out the peaks and valleys of the seasonal nature of those two fishing genres. In fact, one of the busiest times of the year is the season for building rods for ice fishing starting in September. All rods bearing the "Thorne Bros." Name are built on site by Fiebranz, Murphy and their expert staff.

Even though it might feel like a small "family" store, Thorne Bros. is unmatched by any other location in the industry. Even with one of the nations largest retailers down the road, Thorne Bros numbers continue to grow and surpass any other sporting goods retailer in the country. For example, they've sold more Lowrance electronics than 50 of the chain stores combined in last year alone, and they've continued to be Shimano's biggest Top Shelf dealer nationwide. Not only do they excel with name brand products, but they also continually push the envelope of new products with having input on manufacturing and design on everything from ice jigs to bass and walleye boats. One of their biggest strengths is in their selection of hard to find and custom lures.

The "family" isn't limited to just

their sales staff. Thorne Bros. is fortunate to have an incredible Pro Staff. "We feel that our Pro Staff is the strongest around, leading the pack in lure designing and manufacturing, introduction of this wonderful sport to both adults and children, guiding, and most importantly, sharing the importance of CPR (Catch, Photo & Release) with others. With video games and television, younger kids are not being introduced to fishing," Fiebranz explained. "Plus, it's expensive to get started. We don't want it to become an old man's sport". "We've got to focus more on kids and youth programs," added Roundsley. "Muskie fishing will stagnate as a sport if we don't get the next generation involved. Everyone in the sport has to play a part in getting youngsters more interested". As their part in boosting interest among the younger set, a youth event is in the planning stages for next year. Roundsley and Fiebranz hope it will become an annual occurrence.

"Our sport is at an all time high and you have to give credit where credit is due," he continued, "Muskie's Inc. and its catch and release program and education about proper release techniques have made a huge difference in the sport. The Linders, Maina, Mehsikomer, Saric and others have introduced huge numbers of people to the sport. Length limits have certainly helped, and don't forget graphite reproductions. It's made keeping an actual fish unnecessary. It's

**Thorne Bros.** *continued on back*

# Members Only Contest

**ALL ENTRIES DUE ON JANUARY 6, 2005**

It's mid-November and there is still open water so I expect to be busy registering fish until the end of December. The 2004 contest ends on December 31 and all entries must be postmarked by January 6, 2005. Everything must be entered on the web and the winner names to the international chairman by January 10. No exceptions! Time is short! The Winter Picnic/Awards Ceremony is February 19!

You people are the greatest! I have entered well over 60 fish in the past month. I received several entries that could be lunker of the month for October and November and I think I have the winner for October and maybe even for November. Time will tell but I need your entry within 30 days of the catch.

On October 24, Dennis Health release a 45" with a 20" girth on Mille Lacs and Bob Culbertson released a 45" on Sugar Lake on October 26. 46"ers were released by Joe DeMars on Vermilion on October 15 and Mark Fredrick on Bemidji on October 31. Cindy Hegdahl released a 47" on Lake of the Woods on October 7 and Brent Hirsch caught his 47" on Vermilion on October 21. On October 15 Mark Fredrick released a 49" on Lake of the Woods and Carol Heath released a 49" with a 22" girth on Mille Lacs on October 24. These are all nice fish, but none of them are even close to being the winner. On their Lake of the Woods trip in October, Mark Fredrick had the longest release but Cindy Hegdahl released more fish. Cindy needed one more day on a lake. October 24 was the day and Bemidji was the lake. Cindy Hegdahl released was a beautiful, fat, 55" PIG!

Can that 55" be topped in November or December? Well, so far not, but Chris Mueller released a 45" on Sugar Lake in Wright County on November 7. On November 14 using a Jake crank bait, Jim Doyle released a 50" with a 22" girth on Minnetonka, and Tony Sommerfeld released a 52" with a 23" girth on November 6 on Minnetonka. My latest entry comes from Phil Groth with a 50.5" fish that had a 24" girth on White Bear Lake on November 18.

OH... I can't forget our Junior members! Megan Doebler released her second muskie of the year on October 20 on Calhoun. She caught the 40"er casting a yellow and black top water bait in 5 feet of water. Not to be outdone by her little sister, Samantha Doebler also released her second muskie of the year on October 23. The 39" fish hit a black and orange bulldawg in six feet of water.

**STANDINGS: (AS OF 11/19/2004)**

## WOMEN'S DIVISION

1st Place – Terrie DuBe' – 9 fish – 94 points  
2nd Place – Linda Knutson – 3 fish – 46 points  
3rd Place – Diane Dahl – 1 fish – 12 points

## JUNIOR'S DIVISION

1st Place – Evan Nicolai – 5 fish – 78 points  
2nd Place – J.T. Doebler – 3 fish – 24 points  
James Hedensten – 2 fish – 24 points  
Cody Wolff – 1 fish – 24 points  
5th Place – Samantha Doebler – 2 fish – 23 points  
6th Place – Andrew Hedensten – 2 fish – 22 points  
7th Place – Megan Doebler – 2 fish – 21 points  
8th Place – Zachary Weyland – 1 fish – 19 points  
9th Place – Dallas Nicolai – 1 fish – 18 points  
10th Place – Eleni Wolff – 1 fish – 12 points

## MEN'S DIVISION

1st Place – Shawn Kellet – 21 fish – 330 points  
2nd Place – Jim Doyle – 25 fish – 325 points  
3rd Place – Bob Culbertson – 26 fish – 291 points  
4th Place – Brent Hirsch – 18 fish – 237 points  
5th Place – Pete Moller – 17 fish – 234 points  
6th Place – Dean Roll – 16 fish – 221 points

## MASTER'S DIVISION

1st Place – Tony Sommerfeld – 17 fish – 255 points  
2nd Place – Cindy Hegdahl – 12 fish – 193 points  
3rd Place – Kurt Hostager – 13 fish – 174 points  
4th Place – Brian Hanson – 8 fish – 163 points  
5th Place – Patti Slack – 6 fish – 107 points  
6th Place – Mark Fredrick – 7 fish – 102 points

## RELEASE OF THE MONTH – min. contest length 45"

June – Shawn Kellet – 51" – Minnetonka  
July – Greg Randolph – 52" – Eagle Lake, Ont.  
August – Kurt Hostager – 53" – White Bear  
September – Dennis Heath – 54" – Mille Lacs  
October – unofficial – Cindy Hegdahl – 55" – Bemidji  
November – unofficial – Tony Sommerfeld – 52" – Minnetonka

*Reporting all fish, big and small*

**Elaine Randolph, Contest Chair**

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*Classified ads may be submitted by members of the Twin Cities Chapter. Charges are \$5.00 per month per ad. Send ad information and check made out to Muskies, Inc. by the second Friday of each month for insertion into the following month's publication to: Graphic Works, 7125 17th Avenue South, Richfield, MN 55423.*

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# calendar of events

*Muskies Inc. Twin Cities Chapter General Meetings are held the second Tuesday of every month at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 1114 West 79th Street, Bloomington, MN (just off I-494 & Lyndale Ave.) at 7:00 pm.*

## DECEMBER 14

General Meeting. Speaker: Kevin Dickenson. Elections of new Board members and officers.

## JANUARY 11

General Meeting. Speaker: Lance Christensen.

## FEBRUARY 8

General Meeting.

## FEBRUARY 19

Winter Picnic and Awards Ceremony.

## Thorne Bros. *continued from page 3*

the only fishing sport where fishing is actually better than it was a decade ago.”

“Sportshow season is coming fast and we look forward to seeing you at the Chicago Muskie Expo and the Minnesota Muskie Expo, where we will have many specials. If you can’t make it to the shows, check out our complete on-line catalog at [www.thornebros.com](http://www.thornebros.com) or call us at (763) 572-3782. We’ve always given a 10% discount to Muskies Inc. members on lures. Simply let us know you’re a member and provide us with your Muskies Inc. membership number”.

*Editor’s Note: This is the first in a series of articles profiling the retail sponsors who have continuously given their support to the Twin Cities chapter of Muskies Inc. throughout the years.*

## ALL ENTRIES FOR THE MEMBERS ONLY CONTEST MUST BE POSTMARKED BY JANUARY 6, 2005

MUST BE POSTMARKED WITHIN 30 DAYS OF BEING CAUGHT.

MAIL TO: Elaine Randolph  
1039 Wedgewood Lane North  
Eagan, MN 55123

## what’s inside

Thorne Bros. ....	1
Poof or Proof? ....	1
From Our President .....	2
Members Only Contest .....	4



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## next meeting

**DECEMBER 14**

**SPEAKER:  
KEVIN DICKENSON**

*Kevin is a top tournament angler and guide on Minnetonka. He will give tips and techniques to try when fishing one of the metro area’s top muskie fisheries.*