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HOBOS pass the gavel

Steve Smith
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The Lake Martin Home Owners and Boat Owners held its 14th annual meeting at Red Ridge Methodist Church on Feb. 29. Approximately 80 members enjoyed presentations on boating safety proposals presented by Rep. Ed Oliver, and our Marine Police Lt. Mark Fuller. Both speakers are longtime residents of the Lake Martin area and were able to provide firsthand information concerning the passage of new state laws that will help protect those who use Lake Martin and those who live on the shoreline.

Rep. Oliver gave a detailed explanation of the content on the newly proposed House Bill 284, a wake limit proposal that is before the House of Representatives of the Alabama Legislature. Two bills similar to this bill have been killed in the past two legislative sessions by special interest groups or incorrectly written conditions in the bill, so every

effort is being made to get the current bill correct and made into law for the safety of all lake users. Lt. Fuller presented issues that marine police have wanted protected by law that are covered in this bill.

During the business portion of the meeting, the membership elected Steve Smith as the new president of HOBO. The members are very appreciative to Steve for taking on his new role for HOBO after serving as a member of the board.

I have asked Steve to provide some information on his background and hopes for Lake Martin.

Past President Jesse Cunningham

From incoming President Steve Smith

I am very honored for the opportunity to serve the Lake Martin HOBOs. I recently retired as clinical director at East Alabama Mental Health Center. My 40-year career in the mental health field was one of public service. I now look forward to continuing my public service work for the betterment of Lake Martin. We owe much debt to Jesse Cunningham and all those who have been a part of the success of HOBOs. To assure the

continued success of HOBOS, we need these individuals to remain leaders of this valuable organization. I hope I can acquire the knowledge and the wisdom of these leaders as I assist with the mission of Lake Martin HOBOS.

My introduction to Lake Martin occurred in the summer of 1984. I had begun dating a young lady whose older brother had a place on the lake, and we spent time visiting him that summer.

Our love for one another grew, as did our love for Lake Martin. We were married in 1985, and soon after, we began looking for a lake place of our own.

In 1989, we purchased an Alabama Power Company cabin in the Dadeville area. Back in those days, life on Lake Martin was quite different. We brought in our own drinking water; entertained ourselves with *Andy Griffith* VHS tapes; went outside to turn the TV antenna; took lake baths; carried our garbage back to town when we left; and got by without a cell phone. Our pontoon boat was equipped with a 75-horsepower motor, and it was all the power needed.

We lived in Opelika, which was close enough that coming to our lake cabin was a regular family event, and we began to call Lake Martin home. Our son was 3 years old when we bought the cabin, and soon after moving in, we learned we were expecting another child. Our wonderful new neighbors approached us and said we were going to

need more room than we had in our two-room cabin; they explained that, in our neighborhood, we all looked out for each other and they would help us add on to our cabin.

It was like an old-fashioned barn raising, an incredible example of neighbor helping neighbor. That is the way it was done back then. The addition was completed; our family grew; and weekends, holidays and summers were spent at the lake.

We made some of our best family memories here. After our kids moved away to attend college, we decided to fulfill our dream of building a full-time home at the lake. We replaced the cabin in 2010 with what is now our permanent home.

Life on Lake Martin is much different today than it used to be. Many changes have been welcomed: cable TV; garbage pick-up; internet; cell phones; restaurants and shopping. Lake Martin is a beautiful place, but what was once a well-kept secret is now a thriving venue of recreation and commerce.

With this growth is the responsibility for us to be vigilant in looking out for the water and the land. Neighborhoods that were once made up of weekenders are now bounding with full-time residents and vacation rentals.

What has not changed is the beauty of our lake and the importance of working together and being good neighbors. After all, part of what makes Lake Martin so special is the people. Just as we must look out for our water and our land, we must also work to get

along and respect one another. We must all adjust to changes; changes in the environmental and aesthetic appeal of our communities; changes in boat traffic and boating laws; changes in commerce and growth beyond what we knew in the good old days. The challenge of how we navigate and adjust to these changes is vital to the continued safekeeping of our lake.

Lake Martin HOBOS has been critically instrumental in resolving issues that impact Lake Martin. We need the continued growth and support of our HOBOS membership as we navigate through the inevitable changes that will affect our waters, our shores and our neighborhoods. We must all work together through these changes to preserve and protect the treasure that we call home – Lake Martin.

Steve Smith is enthusiastic about serving as president of Lake Martin Home Owners and Boat Owners. Learn more at lakemartinhobos.com.