

Tom Dougherty

The Kettle Falls Hotel was purchased by my great grandfather Robert (Bob) Williams in 1918 for the price of four barrels of whiskey and a thousand dollars. My mom and dad traveled from our home in Hoyt Lakes every weekend during the resort season to help my grandparents Blanche and Charlie Williams at the hotel. I was only a few weeks old when I took my first boat ride to Kettle Falls. I was fortunate to start working at the hotel at a young age as a dock boy. My duties at times included assisting my grandfather, Charlie Williams with opening and closing the dams and transporting guests to and from the hotel on Namakan lake. The hotel was sold to the National Park Service. In the fall of 1978, my parents purchased Rainy Lake Houseboats. Since then, with exception of a couple years, I have lived and worked on Rainy Lake. I graduated from falls high in 1982, University of Minnesota, Crookston in 1985 with an associates degree in resort management. After college I obtained U.S. Coast Guard 100-ton Masters license which I have maintained for over 30 years.

During my summers at the hotel, I met many different characters from the area lakes. One of them was George Esslinger. George look after many of the public campsites found on the lakes and he was also the the Coast Guard Lamplighter for Kabetogama, Namakan, Sand Point, and Crane Lakes. George inspired me and I decided that one day I would like to be the Lamplighter. George retired in the early 80's and my Uncle Mike Williams was hired to replace him. I assisted Mike with his duties as Lamplighter and was hired as his replacement in 2012.

I live with my wife Tami on Rainy Lake where we own and operate Rainy Lake Houseboats along with my brothers. Since 2020 I have been president of the Voyageur Country Houseboat Operators Association. We enjoy all types of outdoor recreation: hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, ATVing and boating.