

MY EARLY MEMORIES OF PLEASANT LAKE – Diane L. Becker

Sixty years ago, the year I was born, my parents bought property in Broad Cove. Jim Steele had owned most of the property (I've been told) and began the process of sub-dividing lots. Mum and Dad and school chum, Doug Philbrick visited Pleasant Lake for swims while students at Central High School in Manchester. Grandfather Becker scorned the purchase, but soon was spending summer weekends sitting in his rocking chair on the porch every weekend expounding on the beauty and peace of the lake.

With no electricity, Dad and his father set to work and built the camp with hand tools and wood from a Massebesic Lake cottage owned by my mother's uncle that was being torn down. The name of the destroyed cottage was "Hesperus" and hence the name of our cottage became "The Wreck of the Hesperus." Dad always said the east side of the lake was the side to be on because you got more sun – and it afforded us views of beautiful sunsets on summer nights. We soon had a camp (we never called it a cottage) with a hand pump to draw water fed by a long, black tube running out into the lake. Held down by cement blocks, that pipe was the bane of my sister's and my swimming – we would inevitable stub a toe on them at least once a summer. Drinking water was brought in glass gallon jugs filled from stops at the rest areas on Rte. 4, the grandparents' or collected from the middle of the lake. Many years later we had a well, dug by Dad, and a pump under the camp that had to be primed every Friday night after we arrived for the weekend.

Dad was a real worker and Saturday and Sunday mornings at around 6 a.m. he would be outside working on some project – usually expanding the camp or adding details to the existing structure. The camp had two bedrooms downstairs with curtains as doors and the upstairs was one huge room filled with beds. The family now had three girls and the one bedroom downstairs had a row of three single beds with sheets that would feel so cold as we crawled into them on Friday nights and so warm in the mornings that we wouldn't want to get out of them. The camp was heated by one woodstove, strategically placed in the middle of the kitchen - a great room with the livingroom area. Of course, as children we didn't want to go to bed when the adults stayed up, so we would crawl out of bed and into the closet under the stairs and spy on the adults in the livingroom by looking out the holes cut into the wall – Dad's attempt at a "built in radio".

Saturday mornings was shopping in Pittsfield at Danis for the weekend groceries and sisters and I would get to pick out one comic book – my favorite was "Archie." Saturday night usually meant a ride and stop at Johnson's for their delicious ice cream – especially their very own blueberry ripple! Evenings and nights would have parents and grandparents lined up in the rocking chairs on the screened in porch, looking out over the lake and feet up against the screen frame. Kids were relegated to the back row. All night long there was a chorus of bullfrogs. Catching large tadpoles and the bullfrogs was a favorite sport along with sunfish using bologna as bait.

The lake, of course, was the main attraction. We swam from morning until almost dark. The worst part was the hour wait after meals – the remedy of the day to prevent cramps. A raft atop metal drums served not only as our diving platform but also a great place to row out to with sandwiches at lunch pretending we were castaways on a far island. An old, long canvas kayak provided hours of entertainment – it leaked enough that we could barely make it across the cove- but every year the girls would dutifully paint it. One year it was pink with green polka-dot. The old wooden rowboat (named DINASU – the first two initials of the girls' names) was as much fun upside down while swimming as it was to row around the lake.

Here sixty years later, the lake is as special to my parents, sisters and brother, my grandchildren and nieces and nephews as it was in my first memories. I am so thankful that Pleasant Lake has retained its beauty and relative health – thanks to those on the lake who care as deeply as we have and do. And to my wonderful parents – who had the foresight and dreams to purchase that plot of land.....I and we can never thank you enough for the joy you provided us throughout the past and future years.