Lin2ourpast

AN ORAL HISTORY OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE SHAPED THE SAND LAKE • ITASCA CO. • MINNESOTA AREA

Introduction

County Road 4 and the many back roads pass by mail boxes and driveways (inroads), but not many structures and less often, people. Even from the lakes, if it weren't for docks and yard lights, we don't see many people. We're low profile people here.

Therefore, it was amazing when well over a hundred people showed up for a memorial graveside service for Luise Anderson in the spring of 2006.

It began to make sense, however, as mourners shared their memories of and connections to Luise and her husband, Bud. These stories were so similar to those other families have from their stops at Anderson's store and post office. Max Mercantile was for years as much a center for community news and activity as anyplace else.

It wasn't just Bud's freshly butchered beef and his patty rice and maple syrup. As he pumped gas, he'd catch us up on local news. If it was before lunch and Luise was done sorting mail, you might be treated to a fresh roll and cup of coffee in the kitchen adjoining the grocery store. Once a week Bud made the trek to Duluth to fill our orders for roof shingles, ladders, and wheelbarrows – anything he didn't carry in his basement hardware/clothing store.

Now that many people like Bud and Luise are gone, their absence reminds us of how much we take each other for granted, how much we count on our being there for each other.

**Actually, though no one really replaces someone else,
our small community calls on each of us to share ourselves,
our time and our talent as the Andersons did.**

Our friends and families, when they visit, marvel at how many people we connect with daily, often mixing chores, social visits, business and news. Imagine the volumes we could fill if we put to written words our day-to-day lives here – our own Sand Lake "Almanac."

That's what we've attempted to put down while it's still available so that the personalities and events that have enriched our lives in this community can be shared and passed on. These are glimpses of our lives here that we might forget otherwise, even if they have helped weave the fabric of this area. This is a celebration of us.

The geographic boundaries, name-consolidated directories, and city-center cemeteries so familiar in small European towns are the outward signs of their histories and traditions. We have the same here without maybe the more outward signs. Our boundaries are blurred, and our cemeteries in the woods. They aren't constant reminders.

In fact, these suggest important aspects of our community. We are a collection of individuals as unique as our homes are different from each other. The woods help keep our distances, but the paths and gravel roads enable us to come together. That's our community. We're close even though

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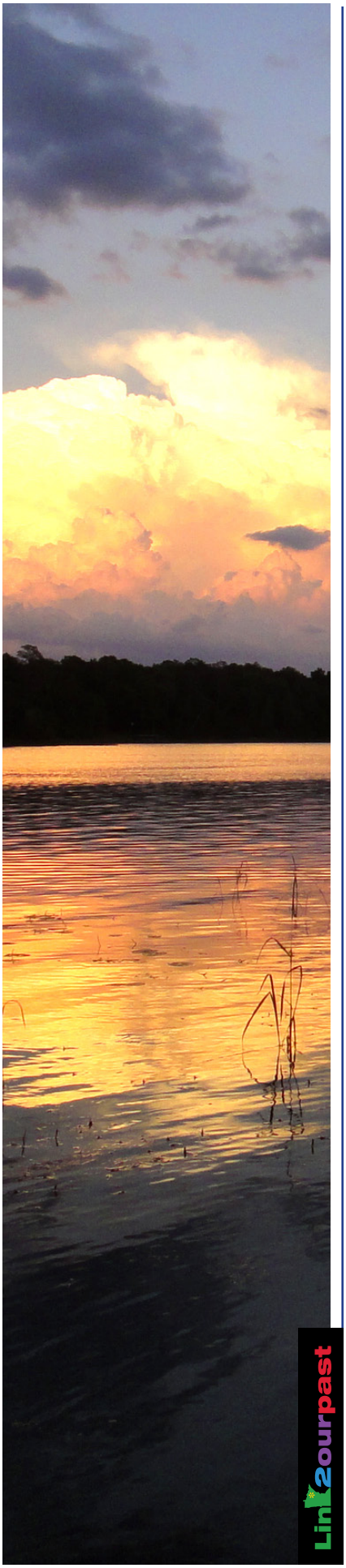


distances separate us.

Writing "Link 2 Our Past" is an important undertaking. We are stretching, s t r e t c h i n g maybe beyond our capabilities, to acquaint a community with itself through the people who live here. It is our dream to unleash a powerful energy by sharing our stories with one another. We live here together. We have a common love of country, laced together by tall trees and clean waters and wailing loon calls.

We are connected, you and I. And not just because we exist on the same planet. We, you and I and you and you – we have the rarest of Links to one another. We love the same obscure smudge on the map here in Northern Minnesota and Northern Itasca County. We are solely and soul-ly connected by quiet bays of water and by ordinary forests with ordinary names like Red and Jack and White and Scotch. There is no affectation in calling a black spruce a black spruce.

We are part of that grand design of the North. We share an intimate inter-relationship with all its living things, and in the particular, one to another; we are an important part of this complex pattern of which all life is an inseparable part.

The difference here in the North is that we can have it all. Right here. We can see the connections of the earth to the fungi and the fungi to the forest and the forest to the birds. We can check out the mosses and the woodbine, the dewdrop and the spider web, the tiny blue anemone protected by hiding under a simple blade of grass. It is all part of our grand point of view, our significance in a world available to all, a vision possible to everyone who has a receptive, yearning curiosity to determine one's very own role in this magnificent scheme of things. One thing we know. We matter.

So, who are you?

What is your reason for being?
What brings vitality and importance to your life?
When your time on this planet is done, what will you leave behind?
With what, or whom, will you connect?

These are some of the questions we have asked you.

George Orwell said it: "To see what is in front of one's nose requires a constant struggle."

Writing "Link 2 Our Past" is a means and an excuse for spending time out of doors and with our friends, and we need your help to examine who we are and why we are here. It's the first step to a life of celebration and appreciation. I think it has a lot to do with that Golden Rule thing.

One more thing –
Think on this: The loon's natural environment is northern. When they're out of their natural environment, they're just another bird.

Many residents have been interviewed so far by us for "Link 2 Our Past." We have already written profiles of many year-round and summer residents.

Along with the interviews, we've been taking photos of the interviewees and other participants in our community groups and activities.

We plan to continue to gather material. If you have ideas for us, whatever and whoever you consider interesting facets of community life in the area, please let us know. We are eager to hear from you. We welcome any ideas no how these stories can be shared. We encourage you to submit your own profile or write one of someone up here you find interesting.

We want to thank those of our Sand Lake family who have shared their perspectives and memories and those who have smiled for the camera at our get-togethers.

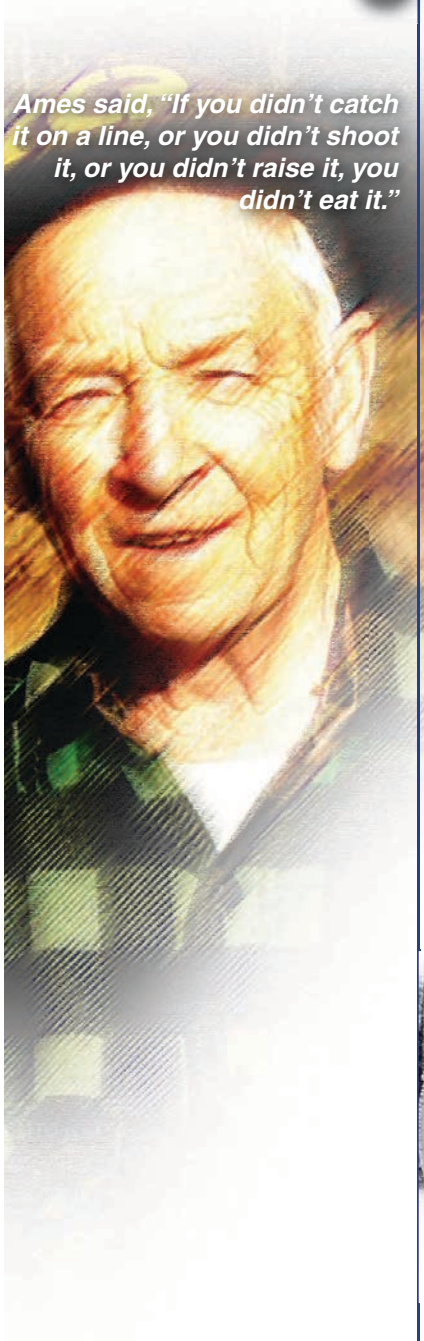
The "Link 2 Our Past" project is helping all of us realize how vital and interesting are the lives of the people in this part of Itasca County. The prospect of interviewing more of you is exciting, and we look forward to receiving your entries.

This is our philosophy for the project. It may sound high-minded and a bit overblown for the simple recording of not so ordinary lives in a not so ordinary place, but it reflects how we feel about what we're doing. Our idea is to make the lives around us more meaningful to ourselves and to each other by determining what values we live by and pass on. We are proud of ourselves, but why? Who are we anyway and how did we get that way?

END INTRODUCTION

Byron **Ames**

By Bernie Troje



Ames said, "If you didn't catch it on a line, or you didn't shoot it, or you didn't raise it, you didn't eat it."

The son of homesteaders, Byron Ames remembers clearly the Sand Lake area before paved roads, bridges, electricity and, of course, convenience stores. In fact, stores of any kind close by. Ames' family was self-sufficient. Ames said, "If you didn't catch it on a line, or you didn't shoot it, or you didn't raise it, you didn't eat it."

Their subsistence living, however, provided for the family quite well. Back in the woods, they had 55 cleared acres. He said, "Dad always made a big garden." His mother did a lot of baking.

Ames' mother spent much time preserving food. "Mother used to can," Ames said, "nearly a hundred quarts each of string beans and then corn and tomatoes." Canning was a delicate procedure. Ames says his mother had to be careful: "A draft would crack the canning jars when they were cooling."

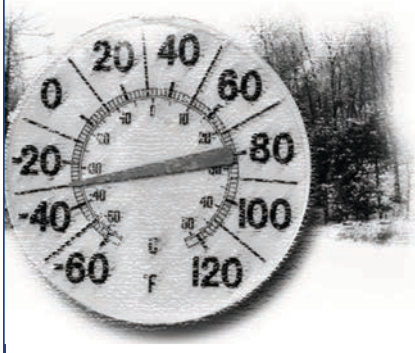
His father grew "potatoes, green mountains and russets (he also grew) a lot of cabbage. He would shred it and put it in large crocks. He had a big tamping stick…. He'd tamp it down real tight. Then he had boards and rocks he washed off and put on the crocks and set them in a place that was cool."

In the summer the Ames' had about 65 head of cattle. They were put out to pasture from early June to the last part of October. Ames said early in the season he'd "try to get [hay] out to them when they didn't see ya. [If] they could smell it they would stampede." Some were beef and the rest were milk cows.

In the winter, his dad harvested ice from the lakes and "put it up in 50 lb. sacks in the shed." In the summer you'd brush the sawdust off the ice, "put a bunch of meat down on it and put more blocks down on the meat." He said, "That meat would keep a long time."

In the winter they closed off a large room in the house away from the heat. They poured the milk into large Karo Syrup containers ("We always used to have a lot of pancakes to eat," he explained) and placed the containers in the cool room. "In that room the milk would freeze….. We waited until it got pretty thick scum on it. Then we'd pour it out, and we could eat that. It tasted just like ice cream to us."

Ames added, "We made real ice cream when someone had a birthday. You can't buy ice cream like that." He explained the ice cream maker they used was one of the few items that they "ordered from Sears."



Ames reminisced they had three kinds of raspberries and even ground cherries then. And, "There was one thing there was lots of. That's fish. We had some for smoking, some for baking, and some for fish chowder with potatoes and onions. Smoking," he said, "it's an all-day-long job." They used "butter salt [for curing] from the creamery, [which is] not as strong as regular salt."

Byron Ames faced other "challenges, we'd call them." During the early grade school years he walked two and a half miles to school. He finished grade school in Spring Lake. In the winter, he said, "We'd go out [side] and look at the thermometer.

If that thermometer struck 30 below zero, we didn't have to go to school. It was too cold. Dad wouldn't take us then."

When he did take them, it was on a four runner sled, a sled his father built. On the cold days they did go, they would sit "around that [wood-burning] stove in the school house until they warmed up. For high school Ames' folks took him to Deer River each week and picked him up on Friday. All we had then were "a lot of dirt roads" so the trip to Deer River was "hard." He boarded at the school in a

Fred & Bea Eggars owned Chapel Hill Resort.

dormitory during the week. He remembers he "had to sweep hallways, peel potatoes and fetch coal in large buckets."

Byron remembers "lots of bear but early on not many raccoon or deer." There had been no raccoons up here, so when the first one was trapped, they didn't know what it was. And, he added, "Civilization brought the deer. They're crazy about cedar."

He also remembers a particular moose his dad didn't shoot because they "already had enough meat."

Their dog, Barney, who "didn't feel comfortable inside the house, burrowed in a hole in one corner of a haystack to stay out of the wind. That dog was all you needed," Ames said, "to keep wild animals out of the garden."

Ames remembers the Eggars who owned Chapel Hill from the late 30's to the late 60's. Byron's father, besides farming, was a handyman for Fred Eggar, who was a part owner and salesman for Graybar. He was gone during the week and entertained clients and friends on weekends. Ames' mother helped Bea Eggar prepare meals for these guests. "Fred was no mechanic," Ames revealed. "He was handy at puttering." Apparently, he wasn't much of a farmer either. Eggar tried to raise chickens. One morning Fred came into Bea's kitchen with two "fresh" eggs from the coop. A few days later Ames' father asked Bea if she had missed the two eggs he had taken from the carton in her refrigerator.

Ames said the first and second bridges across the Bowstring River at Anchor Inn were built before he was born. The second, he remembers because two cars "couldn't meet on the bridge." The current third bridge he thinks was built in the 1940's.

Ames' father passed in 1961. His mother died in 1983. Ames, of course, worked on the family farm, but he also was a trucker until he quit in 1991. Then he logged until 1997. Today Ames is retired on the family homestead. He lives in the family's second home which was built in the 1940's.

Byron Ames remembers fifty pound flour sacks, homemade currant jelly and minus 50 degree temperatures every other winter. His memories also add substance to reports of mob "activity" in the area: Al Capone visiting at what's now Chapel Hill.

After our interview, Byron Ames was standing in the yard of his family's homestead. As I was leaving he told me I should drive over the grass to get back on the driveway. I hesitated, but Ames kept waving me to back up. His parting words: "You don't want to keep things you use too nice."

Link2ourpast

END AMES

Barnes Family *Plane Crash Survival*

By Bernie Troje

Lin and Sheryl Barnes

In Palmer, Alaska on January 1, 2005 it was an overcast day with plenty of ceiling for flying.

What brought us down so suddenly was an electric power line which was not marked and which David and Lin did not see.

It's hard to talk about the four Barnes surviving a plane crash without using the word "miracle." But their recoveries that followed while so many family, friends, and even strangers prayed are also the result of the care, concern, and expertise in the hands of dozens of medical staff and those non-medical family, friends, and volunteers. Also, in no small part, to the Barnes' determination to return to a normal life which slowly took place over the months following the accident.

A big part of Sheryl's recovery was "rebuilding her mind." After they were out of the hospital, her son David made a comment to Susan, his wife, "Mom just isn't too swift."

Sheryl said, "I lost my cognitive thinking. When I first] came too, I didn't know who I was…..and] I couldn't do any sequential thinking at all."

A nerve in her neck was traumatized by a blow to her head when the plane crashed. The part of her hearing she lost will never recover. Furthermore, she had lost her sight at first, and when she could see again, she had double vision. That continued long afterwards whenever she got tired.

She said, "I couldn't put words together into sentences." Before she could speak, she "had to think through] everything she] wanted to say."

Doctors told her she had three years to "rebuild" the brain's injuries. They told her to do crossword puzzles, to read, to do recipes. It was Mother's Day, five months after the accident, before she was able to put a meal together.

Though she had been a math teacher, Sheryl couldn't "do the checkbook." Walking up and down stairs when she still had sight problems, she tried to count the steps but couldn't count beyond three. She, however, "did not allow herself] to get all bent out of shape." With her checkbook and other activities she would "just do a little bit and then put it away."

She resumed knitting for therapy and made scarves for the 15 women who debrided her for a two week period while she was hospitalized. The debriding was scrubbing the parts of her body burned by the "gasoline, not fire, just from the chemical." She said she was burned from her "neck down to my knees."]

Women from the church also stayed with her 24 hours a day. Sheryl mentioned, "The first night, the pastor's wife and her sister slept on the floor by her bed] in a] little, three-cornered room."

When Sheryl started the scarves, "it took her] three evenings to get the stitches on the needle]…" She said, "The third night, I didn't know how the stitches went on…… I remember, I said to Susan, her daughter-in-law], 'How'd I do this'? But the brain kicked in, and from my past learning, allowed me to put those stitches on the needle, and from then on I just started going."

Another breakthrough occurred while the Barnes and some friends in Michigan were traveling together in a car. Sheryl said, "All of a sudden, I became a part of the conversation. I'm not sure what large word I used. I think it was 'scrupulous'.

"I said to Til one of the friends], 'What did I just say'? She looked at me so funny and said, 'What do you mean'? I said, 'What did I just say now'? I didn't think about the word before I said it. It just rolled out. I didn't even know where it came from."

Sheryl's thinking had been kept simple, and she had become quiet. Some of her friends had noticed. Even so, she had never given up. She said, "I think people give up too soon." Up to this breakthrough, she "always had to think what she] was going to say." The key is she "didn't allow herself] to become agitated." She knew she had three years, if necessary, "to rebuild."

Lin began with exercise equipment. He credits family, friends, and rehab people for pushing him. His physical therapy included exercises used for patients after knee surgery and a reclining bicycle which doesn't stress the back.

Though he doesn't remember it, he's been told he was in lousy shape emotionally and didn't want to live. Sheryl pointed out he was "so doped up." He could, however, dial the telephone numbers. Sheryl couldn't dial the sequential numbers but was able to carry on a phone conversation.

Lin was home from the hospital by February, and through March had more rehab.

By April 29, however, both were ready to leave Alaska for their home in Colorado.

Their son David had a 95% chance of having his leg amputated because it was all crushed. Sheryl was almost scalped in the crash, and her nose was just barely hanging on her face. She lost 40% of her blood.

Their grandson, Luke, who was pulled out of the wreckage first had some chemical burns. They were able, however, to change his clothes immediately – into clothes a passing motorist just happened to have in the car.

David remembers nothing of the crash. He asked Lin, "What happened, Dad?" Lin, who had tried to climb out but couldn't, said, "I don't know," and passed out. David started praying and was still praying when rescuers loaded him into the helicopter.

The time between the crash and the completed rescue seemed interminable. One ambulance came from a camp just down the road, but the ambulance from Sutton took 45 minutes. The jaws-of-life couldn't go as fast. All these teams had to wait for the power company to remove the lines downed by the plane before the rescue could proceed.

When the plane began to lose power and descend, most likely David was going to land on the highway. The plane's engine was recalled five months after the crash. The utility lines that downed the plane were not marked with the visible red balls required.]

Through the whole ordeal, someone was always praying. The family feels they were surrounded by the Lord. Lin called it "an inner peace."

While they recuperated, they had sitters around the clock. Friends from Mankato, where they once lived, church members up there, David's wife Susan's friends from Denver, others from Castle Rock, Colorado, their winter home, and Phoenix. The turning point in Lin's recovery was when Brett from Mankato insisted on springing him from the hospital to take him out to breakfast.

So they could be accommodated at David's home, men from their church redid the basement. They made the bathroom handicap accessible, built two additional bedrooms, and put in wheelchair accessible doors.

While raising five boys, Susan organized much of this homecare, medications and schedules for caregivers. Hundreds of people were involved one way or the other.

A friend of Davids, an OB/Gyn doctor, came to take care of him, and a pediatrician friend from med

school came from his practice in Idaho to take care of the youngest son who became seriously ill with the flu during this time.

The story in their words……..

Sheryl:

In Palmer, Alaska on January 1, 2005 it was an overcast day with plenty of ceiling for flying. Palmer is approximately 40 miles northeast of Anchorage. We flew northeast of Palmer, following the Matanuska River. We flew by the Matanuska Glacier and over Sheep Mt. (about 70 miles by road from Palmer).

We were on a search for caribou.

Our son, David, his 2 year old son (Luke), Lin and I left David's house at noon. David started flying when he was 16 and has taught flying in the Baltimore, Denver and Dallas areas. He owned a six seater Maule airplane and stored the airplane in a friend's hangar

We left the hangar at 1:00 p.m.

Lin and David were in the two front seats and Luke and I were in the second row. Luke sat behind his dad's seat. David had placed a pillow between Luke and the door and between Luke and David's seat. Luke sat next to me on my left.

We were all dressed warmly. Luke was in his snowsuit with mittens and boots.

We had been flying for approximately one hour when I became very cold. I then took off my earphones and put on my wool stocking knit ski cap. I tucked Luke's blankets all around him. (He was asleep, leaning against my arm.) In so doing, I looked out Luke's window and could see that we were flying just above the tree tops and at an angle to the highway. I had time to think that David never flew that low and maybe something was wrong with the plane's engine. I then heard Lin say, "There's the road, David." And David said something about roads and planes. (I couldn't hear or can't remember exactly what he said, but it is legal in Alaska for planes to land on the roads.) What brought us down so suddenly was an electric power line which was not marked and which David and Lin did not see.

The next thing I remember was that it was so very quiet. Luke was not talking or crying. He must have still been asleep. The snow was covering my window. (We were buried in about 6 to 8 feet of snow). I then heard Lin say, "I can't do it." (He was trying to get out of his airplane door). David was all bent over in his seat, and I then heard him say, "What happened Dad?" Lin said, "I don't know." Immediately I heard David start to pray, "Lord Jesus, please stand by us. Lord Jesus, please stand by us. I then passed out, right after I heard a voice telling me that we would all be safe. I remember very little after that for about 30 hours other than being lifted straight up and a voice saying, "Stay with us, Sheryl."

We were probably in the airplane at least an hour and a half because we had to be cut out of the airplane by the Jaws of Life which were one hour away from the accident. The highway patrol registered the accident between 2:00 and 2:30 p.m. The power company had to take care of the live wires before the Jaws of Life could assist us.

It took two and a half hours to cut David out of the plane according to the ambulance staff. They also said that our son was praying when they walked up to the crash site and that he never stopped praying even while they cut him out of the plane and loaded him into the helicopter.

The very first thoughts that I had in the hospital were "The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want." I was in the hospital for two weeks, and those words kept going through my head. Gradually over time, I was able to repeat the entire 23rd Psalm. My grandmother taught me that scripture from the Old Testament when I was a little girl, and at a critical time of need, those words came to me.

Lin:

It is legal to land airplanes on the roads in Alaska.

Both Susan (David's wife) and Bruce (our son) tell us that I was talking about a chattering noise. I don't remember saying any of this, but the kind of noise described would go to a crank case problem. Since the accident, David's engine has been recalled by Lycoming, the engine manufacturer. Evidently when we hit the power line, David was planning to land the plane on the road because of an engine problem.

I passed out after trying to get out of the plane. I do remember lying in the snow and being very cold.

Let me tell you about the first three cars which came upon our accident: We had first hit in a ditch along side the highway and then we bounced to our final landing in 6 to 8 feet of snow.

-In car number one was a pilot familiar with the Maule airplane. He guided the cutting apart of the plane in order to avoid hitting metal and producing sparks. All of the gas in the right wing had dumped out of the tank. There was no fire.
-In car two: EMTs (emergency medical technicians) traveling to Valdez to work.
-In car three: A man and woman with clothes and shoes and blankets for a 2 year old boy.

A lady from Palmer took pictures, visited Sheryl in the hospital, and then called Sheryl to share that her photos did not include a man who was walking around the plane several times. She had tried to follow him to ask questions, but he had disappeared. She was confident that he was in some of the pictures which she had taken, but he did not appear in them when the film was developed. She said, "Did I see an angel of the Lord and I did not recognize him?"

Luke was the first to be taken out of the plane. The EMTs checked him and then gave him to the man and woman who had been the third car. They took off all of his gas soaked clothes and shoes and dressed him in what they had in their car. They were told to keep him talking so that he would not go into shock. He rode in the ambulance with me to the Palmer Hospital, and the EMTs said that when they were working to keep my blood pressure from bottoming out, Luke was all concerned. He kept saying, "What you doing, my gramps?"

Sheryl was the first to be taken to the Palmer hospital because she was bleeding profusely from head wounds. She lost 40% of her blood from head lacerations. She was almost scalped. The head was cut from front to back, going around the head. Her nose was broken and hanging on her face. She had a deep cuts to her lip and hand. She had second and third degree burns to her arms and torso from the aviation fuel. She was scrubbed daily for about five weeks. At the time of the accident the right wing had bent over and come through Sheryl's window, dumping the gas in that wing over her and some onto Luke. From the trauma, she had a head injury with loss of cognitive thinking, double vision and some hearing loss in the right ear. She had a neck injury, but no broken bones.

Luke and I were second to be taken to Palmer in the ambulance.

Luke was checked at the Palmer hospital. He had slight chemical burns from the gasoline and was scrubbed for about a week by a doctor who came to David and Susan's house. Luke never went into shock. Today he flies his toy] airplanes and when he crashes them into the ground, we hear him say, "Oops, crashed again."

It was probably a one and one-half hour drive to the Palmer hospital where I was x-rayed and then sent to the Trauma Center at the Regional Hospital in Anchorage. There I had two surgeries: one for a crushed pelvis and one for a smashed lower left leg below the knee cap. I'm now the owner of two metal plates which send the airport security systems crazy. I also had a head laceration with subdural bleeding.

My system did not like the trauma. Consequently, I had gall bladder problems, blood clots to the lung, high blood sugar, and both kidney and bowel shutdowns.

I was hospitalized for five weeks, three of those weeks in the intensive care unit.

Sheryl tells me that I was non-communicative for about 3 ½ weeks, and I know that I really did not start talking much until March 1.

When I got to David's house, I needed 24 hour care for another two weeks. I could not put any weight on my pelvis or left leg until March 1. It was then that I started walking with a walker.

Now both Sheryl and I are golfing again.

David was airlifted to Providence Hospital In Anchorage. There was a 95% chance that his left leg would have to be amputated. However, once again the Lord took care of us. He had an exceptional surgeon who just happened to be on call, and saved David's leg. He found only 14 pieces of the knee cap, fitted them together, bone grafted to fill the void and rebuilt the leg and ankle. David had deep lacerations on his arms and a crushed ankle. He had 15 procedures done in six surgeries. Today he is walking without a cane, but with pain. He says, however, "He is just fine and that he has worked through all of that trauma with God's help and put it all behind him." David is lean and tall but he has taken off 25 pounds in an attempt to lighten the load on the knee and ankle. Today he is back to working 12 hour days.

END BRNES

Sheryl:

These were the serious side of our experience. There were some humorous parts, however. We are told that one day David was flying the space shuttle and talking about what he was doing and seeing. Lin was parking and sorting farm machinery, and I was driving a covered wagon. Lin was fairly non-communicative until our friends from Mankato came to help. Peer pressure kicked in. Brett invited Lin to go for breakfast, and Lin said that he couldn't possibly do that. Brett said, "And why not." You see, Brett has had four life threatening surgeries and has been at the bottom of the barrel all four times. He always popped back to the top, however. Lin's brain finally kicked in and out he went in a wheelchair for breakfast.

When I had to feel my way along the walls because I had double vision, the nurses told me to use the walker. When I encountered steps at David and Susan's house, I decided that I would count the steps, and then the next time I would know how many steps. What a joke! Without cognitive thinking, I couldn't remember how to count. However, perseverance got me up and down steps.

Erick & Viola **Carlson**

By Bernie Troje

At one time or other, many, if not most of us – probably most – have called on Erick Carlson for some kind of help: clearing a building site; having him dump his barnyard scrapings on our woodland gardens (which have fewer than six inches of top soil); building an inroad, or hauling gravel for one already established; putting in a septic system; and probably dozens of odd jobs individualized for each resident. All this while he farmed, logged, and graded for the township.

"Call Erick" has been a phrase repeated more than most. Fortunately for us, though he's moved three times, it's never been far: from the farm on 127 to the home on Little Sand Lake to their current home on County 4.

Meanwhile, Viola, his wife of almost 60 years, raised three children, two girls who now live in the cities, and a son Curtis, who with his wife Laurel, lives on adjoining land where, for several years, they had a greenhouse business. Curtis has continued with Erick to haul gravel and put in septic systems.

Obviously, the Carlson's are full time residents who have contributed their many talents over the years to a community to which they have been very loyal. Viola has served on the township board and as treasurer for the Evergreen Friendship Club and is currently treasurer and historian for W.O.W. (Women of the Woods). One of Erick's more recent roles was finding entertainment for the monthly Friendship Club get-togethers, sometimes providing it himself playing his accordion.

They were charter members of the Sand Lake Missionary Alliance Church and donated the land for its permanent site. Now they attend the Northwoods Chapel on County 36.

If you drive County 4 you've passed Erick in his gravel truck or Viola on her daily bike ride. While they lived on Little Sand they often celebrated the summer holidays with a Pick 'n Post in their pole barn. If you attended you were supposed to bring a dish-to-pass and your talent. Residents took turns on the "stage," singing, clogging, playing in their own band or solo, telling jokes, each act introduced by Erick who kept his accordion strapped on for the duration of the show. Viola always provided the setting: bales of hay arranged as seating, a buckboard wagon with manequins in western-pioneer garb, and seasonal touches such as cornstalks, tree branches and pumpkins.

Howard and Edith Hallet would drive over in a restored Model T, Warren Felts would come with his tuba, and Jim Justesen with his drums.

More than once, on other occasions, the Carlson family and friends were out on the lake on a pontoon with Erick playing his accordion for the group.

It's easy to picture Erick with his accordion at church. But it's been up close and personal where he's made his best impression. He's always had time for a conversation which usually includes a Sand Lake Township story from the recent or distant past. His folks settled the area. He was born here. So he's a walking history book of our community.

Erick was born February 17, 1930. It was a cold, snowy winter. His mother had him in the Grand Rapids hospital, and it took a relay of people to get her and her new baby boy back to the farm.

Link2ourpast

Erick's folks came in 1923. Erick said, "There were a lot of bachelors up in the woods here who came for the land at $1.25 per acre. They cut wood, peeled it and sold it for $6.00 a cord of spruce delivered to the mill, but the hauler took half of that. They could cut a cord a day.

The doctor got them as far as Jessie Lake, where they stayed for a week. In his 1929 Nash, the Baptist minister there, with chains and a snow shovel got them as far as Ames Road. That's when the mailman, Pete Oslund, came along with a sled pulled by a team of ponies. He had a little enclosure on top of the sled where he carried the mail. That's where Erick and his mom rode the rest of the way to the farm. Erick was delivered (to his home) by parcel post.

It is Pete Oslund, after whom the 'town' at Anchor Inn is named. Before 1923 everyone had to go to Spring Lake for their mail. Erick's uncle, Patrick Johnson, started the first mail route from Spring Lake to Oslund with his sleigh in the winter and his motorcycle until July 1st each summer.

Seth Pearson (Erick's uncle) came over from Sweden in 1902 when he was eighteen. He heard about the homesteading, and he came to this area in 1905. You had to clear at least five acres in five years to secure your homestead and sleep on that property your first night. Erick's folks came in 1923. Erick said, "There were a lot of bachelors up in the woods here who came for the land at $1.25 per acre. They cut wood, peeled it and sold it for $6.00 a cord of spruce delivered to the mill, but the hauler took half of that. They could cut a cord a day.

When Erick was growing up they had ten by sixteen foot tarpaper shacks to stay in while cutting wood. These had beds and barrel stoves. They would stay at these shacks four to five days at a time before going home for the weekend.

They used horses with which to skid the logs. Erick once froze his ears and nose driving the horses. Every year after that, his nose would start peeling at that time.

Erick and his brother Art's wages went to support the family, to supplement the family's income. Their parents, John and Agda Carlson, stayed on the farm to take care of the cows and cut firewood. In 1945 Art and Erick used their logging wages to buy a brand new Oliver tractor for $975.00. Later they bought implements. The plow, Erick remembers, was $75.00. Up until then they had used a team of horses to plow the fields. At the time their farm was 25 to 30 acres. Their crops were oats, alfalfa and tame hay which was feed for the animals. Later they added six to seven acres of silage corn. At the time they had beef cattle.

In this area people depended on each other. That made them a close community. They'd help each other thrash oats and put up the farm buildings. They'd go together to buy a piece of farm machinery. Once it was a manure spreader. Seven people owned it and took turns using it. His uncle Patrick would want to use it last so he could use it as long as he wanted. The farmers were DFL'ers and called their manure spreader the "Republican Platform."

Erick was involved in 4-H from age nine through 18 years of age. One year he won a trip to the State Fair as an usher at the grandstand for ten days.

The Sand Lake school house was their community center. The students always put on holiday programs and served ice cream. Erick remembers the B. P. Johnson family would play their instruments and sing. Before the church was built, they had their Sunday services there as well.

After the Northwoods Chapel was built, there were missionary students who came and stayed in the basement. The Johnson's, who had a car, would pick up the children for Vacation Bible School. Erick feels close ties to the church for these reasons.

At the time, where the Ames family lived was a separate "neighborhood." Erick said the Bohemians settled east of here, and the Finnlanders had Squaw Lake.

Link2ourpast

As people acquired cars, these groups got together for house parties and began to intermarry. Viola and Erick met roller skating at the V.F.W. Hall near Talmoon off Highway 6. They've been married for 59 years as of August 11, 2012.

"She's been a pretty good wife," Erick says. "She stayed home and took care of the kids…she did a good job."

Viola remembers pinching pennies and baking bread.

Erick adds, "After the kids were a little older, she (Vi) went to work part time but she was always home when the kids came home from school."

Of their three children, Cindy Silbernagel, Sherry Weis & Curt Carlson, Viola says, "Every one of them worked for Fred Eggar at Chapel Hill."

Erick adds, "With extra money they earned they could buy an extra pair of shoes. A lot of their clothes were home sewn."

Viola and Erick have fond memories of their neighbors from those days.

Erick said, "That's one thing. I really miss all the old timers I grew up with."

Vi misses Hazel Rosenbush Howard Hallet's sister. Erick said, "She was a sweetheart."

They remember the Underhills who bought Chapel Hill from the Eggars as "fun people." Vi said, "She'd Vi Underhill have a nice dish of rolls in the cabin for people who rented for a week."

Erick talked at length about Howard Hallet's parents, Walt and Annie. Walt "liked to live off the land, whatever he could find in the woods…. I just thought of him today, how interesting he was to talk to. They lived on venison, and they had a very big garden, and they lived on fish…. I think they had a cow, and they'd milk it. To patch a tire for his old Chevrolet, Walt would take a stove bolt and patch it with part of an old tire…. To see if he could get another mile or two out of it."

About Fred and Bea Eggar, Vi recalled, "They were so nice. Our kids loved them. They loved the kids. They played Old Maid. Fred, he'd get the Old Maid card and he'd hide it."

Erick added, "Fred was a good teacher. He always tried to teach ya, didn't he?"

Of Warren Felts, who was a good friend of theirs, Erick said, "He was a prince." Erick reminded that both Warren and Bill Heide from Spring Lake performed in "Showboat" when it came to Grand Rapids. Bill also sang on radio station KOZY.

The one thing Erick really misses is the old and faithful neighbors, such as the Stone family, Stangland family, Ostlund family, Wadman family, Okerman family and his uncle Patrick Johnson.

In 1979 Erick and Viola sold their farm and built a home on Little Sand Lake. Erick continued hauling dirt and gravel and did small construction jobs and put in septic systems.

More recently Erick and Vi spent five winters in Mesa, Arizona to escape the cold winters in northern Minnesota.

Of course, as a couple who were second generation settlers, the Carlson's are very much aware of how things changed in the past fifty years up here. His father's yearly income around 1940 was $1,000.00, and that was a lot. After the war incomes began to climb. The weather has also changed drastically. In 1966, so much snow fell the roads were just barely kept open.

Erick and Vi have flown to Sweden three times to share a family reunion and to renew their acquaintance with uncles, aunts and cousins. It used to take three weeks to get a letter to their relatives in Sweden. Now, with the internet, it's a "blink of an eye." And even though you used to wear out a Model T in 25,000 miles, the Carlson's wonder if we're better off.

Now, they feel we don't have time to enjoy what we have. Erick points out, "We wanted more stuff and went out and worked. That probably wasn't the best thing for raising a family and keeping the family together. Families no longer sit down at a table together. That kind of holds families together. That's the trouble with the families and the kids today, you know. They aren't glued together like years ago."

END CARLSON

Dean & Joan **Christian**

By Elinor Wright & Martie Wilson

Martie and I answered the call. Earlier in the day about one in the afternoon Dean Christian telephoned me that he and Joan had their life-story written. He said, "Can you come over to hear me read it? I'm worried about your being able to read my writing."

"Dean! That's wonderful," I said. Let me call Martie. If she can come, we'll be there by three o'clock."

Martie could come, so we listened to the story of the Christians. Here it is as we heard it:

Joan shared first: It was one of those warm spring nights in Minnesota in the year 1934 where everything is wonderful. Dean and I were sitting high up on a Ferris wheel at the Minnesota State Fair – getting acquainted. He was 18 and I was 17. He was quite a talker, and I was fascinated by his many stories. The Ferris wheel was stuck, and we sat there for hours not minding that it was uncomfortable and scary.

That's how we met. He was a friend of my girl friend Phyllis. The next day he called me asking for a date. And so it began. Seven years later we were married. I was a secretary at Mason Publishing Company working as a proof reader of legal books in Shakopee, and Dean was working for Donaldsons in Minneapolis. We lived in Stillwater and commuted.

Then Dean began to read their story: Joan and I met at the State Fair. On a Ferris wheel. We began dating and fell in love. We dated for four years while I was at the University of Minnesota. I finished my schooling, and we got married July 7, 1941. We took our honeymoon on a trip west – to Yellowstone and all. Joanie had never been out of Minnesota. She was amazed!

We moved to Stillwater where I had a good job - $22.50 a week! I got a better job about a year later, and we moved to St. Paul and then to Mankato where I had a better job. I quit that job and started a sport shop with a very nice man, Warren Denison. We did very well, but Warren needed more money as he had a big family of five kids. We had only two. So his dad bought me out all on very good terms.

Warren was my best friend, and I learned a lot from him: not to be afraid to invent! He invented the Johnson Fishing Reel.

I got a job as a pharmaceutical salesman (for Medical Detailer), calling on doctors. My minor at the U. of M. was biology, and I found it a great help in learning all the medical terms and how to use the drugs, etc. I studied all the medical books. I found that almost all the doctors taught me a good deal. I did well and worked for this big drug company for almost 15 years.

Then I decided to go on my own and I took a job with a doctor, Carl Canfield, a friend who started a drug company. I worked only on commissions, and he got me another company – a surgical supply house. This way I had two checks every month. Then I got three more drug companies and got five

checks every month.

I liked being on my own. I didn't have to answer to anyone but myself. I also made more money. During my years with the big company, I sold a chemical compound that was used in surgical procedures. I talked another young friend into making products that contained this compound (methylbenzothonium). I had him put this compound in a solution to wash patients in the nursing homes. It stopped all decubitus ulcers that were common in nursing homes. I also put it in a body powder and in lotions and creams.

Dean: I knew it! I knew how to sell methylbenzothonium! Part of my job was to go to every town and get all the doctors together and demonstrate how it worked and to get them all to agree to use it.

I knew it! I knew how to sell methylbenzothonium! Part of my job was to go to every town and get all the doctors together and demonstrate how it worked and to get them all to agree to use it. All the gowns, caps, surgical masks used in surgery were washed a certain way and treated with it. When those clothes got wet, it instantly activated the methylbenzothonium.

We made a lot of money. I sold all of it and eventually the company sold for $80 million dollars. I didn't get too much of the money as I was not a partner, but I had stock, etc. I did have a contract for making the invention so the new company (Coloplast) had to pay me as long as my wife and I lived.

Dean has another invention that he hasn't done anything about. It's a good invention that he says will someday pay off – how to stop Lyme Disease." Most people wear knee boots and tuck tape around to tape to pants. He says ticks are mostly on the ground and jump on you and immediately start climbing up. He's invented a special stirrup sock with a plastic inverted cuff with permanone which kills the tick as it tries to climb up.

I retired at 68 and took my Social Security. So, as you can see, we did fairly well, and the only and most devastating part of our life was that our two sons both died. Keith, our oldest, had ALS, and Steven our adopted son had lung cancer. Keith was 45; Steven lived to 51 – so we do have a bunch of grand kids and great- and great-great-grandkids. I don't want to dwell on this, but unless it has happened to you, there is no way you can understand this terrible loss."

Joan shared some more: We had gone on lots of other trips besides Yellowstone. We took four cruises – to Alaska, Hawaii, Venezuela and the Panama Canal. We've gone to Scandinavian countries, Germany, Austria and others in Europe. We went to South America through the Panama Canal on a freighter. There were eight of us. Everything was just as clean as a regular cruise and not as expensive.

We took a lot of trips, but when all was said and done there is no place better than Sand Lake – right here!

Now we're in our 'twilight years' and find living very difficult. Disease of some kind or other takes over and you wonder when the end will come; but we take it all with a grain of salt and try to 'play our deck of cards.' God has a super plan for all of us.

Joan: I worked at the University in Mankato, about 7 years, I think. I worked in the theater. That was fun. Kids were on the stage.

I have fibromyalgia, arthritis of the spine and Parkinson's disease. Dean has been a wonderful caretaker for these eight years.

I worked at the University in Mankato, about 7 years, I think. I worked in the theater. That was fun. Kids were on the stage. One night a kid wore two different colored shoes. I noticed one was black and one was brown. It was so much fun.

Joan added that her other career was cleaning ladies houses for $1 a day. She was born 1918 in St. Paul.

Dean and Joan both say they love living up at the lake. Dean added that if he had his way, and Joan didn't have her 'troubles' they'd move up here. But as it is they need to be closer to medical facilities.

How did they end up at Sand Lake? Dean said that his folks owned a resort about 80 miles south of here on Mitchell Lake. Dean's dad was a bank examiner and lost his job during the depression. He told his family they were going up north and buying a resort and would make a living there. He had a good rifle, good shotgun and good fishing pole, and they would grow a garden.

Later, when Dean and Joan looked for a place to have a cabin they had an old friend who took them around to look at places. They only knew Little Sand Lake and had checked out places there.

Then, in 1972, they saw signs and discovered Big Sand Lake and two lots for sale on Eggar Rd. Paul Bloom had just made a down payment on the other lot, and Dean thought this one was a pretty good one. "It was all brush and mosquitoes like mad," he said. "We camped here the first summer and put up a screen house by the lake. In the evenings we would sit in the screen house and play cards by gasoline lantern."

Dean and Joan also vacationed to the southwest in a trailer when the kids were little. They started out with a tent, then a small trailer, then a bigger one. Over the years they had three Airstreams and an Avion. They went to Spokane to Dean's brothers and took in all the parks on the way. In the southwest, they hunted various stones in desert areas. They took group hikes. Everyone in the group was musical, playing banjos, guitars, harmonicas. Joan added, "We'd have bonfires at night and lots of music. Once when we camped in the desert, Dean went to split some wood for a camp fire and the axe bounced right off the wood – it was ironwood."

They spent several months in the desert area living in Airstream trailers. Two of the places they stayed were Ajo and Why, Arizona. Joan asked, "Why would anybody live there? We wonder how it's all changed now."

After the kids were grown, they went south every winter. They would go to Corpus Christi – a 65 mile long island and camp on the beach. . Dean said they would meet all kinds of people: "If you go to a hotel or motel, you go to your room and hardly meet anyone. But when you go camping, you can hardly get your camp set up when people start coming over to visit."

Joan went on: "Dean had a 4-wheel drive job and would drive down the beach about 10 miles and park, put on his waders and go fishing. One day he no sooner than got parked and was fishing when another vehicle arrived and parked – a little too close for comfort, Dean thought.

Dean continued: "This guy came on a tiny little motorcycle about this high. (Dean holds up his hand, not very high.) "He looked a lot like a hippie if I ever saw one. I caught a big fish that fought like mad – I had a light line, 6 pound test, on my fishing pole. When a wave came, I'd back up on beach and hold him where it was. I kept doing that, using the waves to help bring the fish in."

"The fellow came by and I hollered, 'Grab that hook and gaff my fish.' He jumped off his tiny motorcycle and waded out and grabbed my fish.

"The fellow introduced himself, 'I'm Arthur Murray and I don't dance and we live on 42nd street.'"

Dean and Joan met the fellow's wife and three or four dogs that slept in the trailer with them. It turned out that Arthur Murray was one of the guys who worked on the Atomic bomb. He told Dean that he wrote two volumes on the synthesis of radioactive isotopes. They lived in Los Alamos, Mexico.

Dean said when they got home, Joanie looked up the volumes in the college library and saw that they were really there. Next year Dean and Joan saw Art in Corpus Christi and told him they got his books. "Art asked if we read them," and Dean replied, "Read them? We couldn't even lift them!"

Fifty years ago, I invented a flying decoy. They were so good, they were outlawed.

Dean has won many awards for shooting – competition pistol, rifle, shotgun. He said, "I didn't devote as much time to it as I should because I had a family." He's really proud of winning the State Champion Trap Shooting in Senior Vets Division in 2000 "When I was 84 years old. It isn't as high an honor as champion [in the class] open to anyone, but when you're 84 and you win anything you're pretty lucky."

He said he's is also an Inventor: "It's just my life. These decoys up here (on the wall) are inventions of mine, made out of plastic. Fifty years ago, I invented a flying decoy. They were so good, they were outlawed. But recently I was at Cabella's and saw a 'new' flying decoy that the salesman pitched. He was surprised when I told him I invented those 50 years ago." Dean invented with his friend Warren Dennison. They made several hundred flying ducks and painted them with spray gun and brush. They changed the wings to be open. All their friends wanted them. They placed advertisements in Field and Stream and Outdoor Life, and got all the money back that they invested. Then they quit making them, and Dean still has about 100 at home in attic.

Dean shared, "The best advice I ever got was from Warren Dennison. I always had a lot of ideas and thought they were junk. Warren said, 'Try it – it might fly.' I have a patent on a cabin (like this) for an artificial log house made out of PVC pipe, light weight, and all the insulation is inside the pipe. It's all pre cut, as easy as can be. Anyone could make it. But I'm ahead of my time. I think something like this will be done. If they can make your dash board look like it's made out of wood, anything can look like wood."

Dean has also patented cement blocks you put underneath [the cabin] filled with foam. He said

he thinks they have something like it out now.

He goes on to say, "I have a new idea now which I can't divulge. The company was paying me but quit, and I've had to write them twice threatening to turn the case over to an attorney. Now they've been in touch and want to buy my idea and say it will be settled up in 30 days."

The best advice Dean ever gave: "Quit smoking. I wrote a paper on it and a lot of people have quit because of it. I tried marketing this, but you should have a lot of promotion, and that takes a lot of time. At 91, I don't have time to be tied down too long." Joan added, "A lot of fellows have quit." Dean is also an author. He says he has lots of stories he doesn't have completed yet. He wrote a story, "Just by Chance," that was published in The Accurate Rifle in the February 2004 issue. Joan added she was published, too. In Airstream, I think."

Joan was asked about her philosophy of life: "What's my philosophy of life, Dean? " He replies, "Love."

Joan said, "I know opposites sure attract, because Dean and I are sure opposites. He's everything I'm not, and I'm everything he's not. He's like black and I'm like white, just the opposite. But it's worked for 67 years."

Dean's philosophy is quit smoking, be happy and have a dream. He said, "If you start saying I'm too darned old, or I don't have time to do this, pretty soon you quit doing anything. Happiness doesn't cost money. You can't buy happiness and can't buy love. People think they need lots of money. They do need enough money to be comfortable and have a good life, but money can't buy love or happiness."

He says, "We've had a good life. You can mourn only just so long, and I'm sure a psychiatrist would tell me I didn't mourn enough or in the right way, but we did the best we could and it's all anybody can do, and we do it all - a day at a time."

Joan adds, "We still laugh. I don't know why, but we make the best of it. One day walking through Walgreens with my friend. A lady ran up to me and hugged my waistline and said, 'Keep it up, you're doing just great.'"

We've had a lot of friends and unfortunately most of them are gone.

We all have our hopes and beliefs, but what difference does it make. We only have one life and that's it."

END CHRISTIAN

Link2ourpast

Jim & Julene **Delesha**

By Bernie Troje

Our "Links" are full of surprises. Just as the woods nurture the individual in us to emerge, or at least allows this to happen, the observable results can be startling.

"You and God certainly have accomplished a lot here."
"Yes," the farmer replies, "but you should have seen it when God was working on it by himself."

Who'd expect, miles from pavement, at the end of a gravel road, to find an expansive lawn, carefully pruned trees and bushes, setting off a compound including an authentic log home, a large, finely carpentered "bunkhouse," a fancy but extremely useful pole barn filled with state-of-the-art maintenance tools and machines to keep the grounds in its state-of-perfectly-controlled nature? All the result of years of brushing and burning while maintaining the natural rolling forest floor. Without the buildings it could be a carefully designed wilderness golf course. Indeed, all it'd need is the greens.

Painstaking efforts have been taken to turn individual, old-growth trees into nursery specimens, to cultivate islands of spruce and balsam as they've sprung up in the newly created open areas. The spacing and choice and "placement" of these remnants of a wild woods is landscape architecture at its best.

Nearly all was there, just as a piece of sculpture "lived" inside the granite. The art is to carefully chisel away at the stone, the landscape, to reveal what was "hidden."

The surrounding wilderness, a pristine lake surrounded by mature deciduous and coniferous trees, as well as the expansive northern sky above, more apparent because of the clearing, frame this homestead, underscoring the contrast which makes each a compliment to the other. The views this space affords are simply spectacular.

This open space is welcoming. Nothing is enclosed or confining. Walk the property on a summer evening as a year old fawn darts here and there.

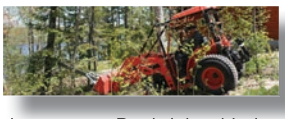
The lake and dock are invitations to a broader perspective of water, shoreline, and compound. It's easy to trace the year that turned a resort-deer camp into the Delesha family retreat. Only one of a number of the old buildings remains, a less than carefully carpentered drop-siding cabin by the shore, a storage facility now on its way to demolition.

Going from there to the southwest area of the clearing is the nearly completed bunkhouse for Jim's sons' families and his hunting buddies. The pre-fab logs and complementary shake siding, the eyelid overhang off the front, the open side deck, generous screened porch and green corrugated metal roof with its generous overhang and broad fascia boards certainly must be inviting to the Delesha's guests.

Between this and the pole barn is the open-wall shed. Its overhanging roof and wall-less sides protect Jim's woodpiles, his fuel source, from the elements yet permit the logs to properly dry. As he continues to expand the boundaries of his landscaping, the trees he takes down heat his home in the winter.

Painstaking efforts have been taken to turn individual, old-growth trees into nursery specimens, to cultivate islands of spruce and balsam as they've sprung up in the newly created open areas.

Past the woodshed is the pole barn. Inside is Jim's new Japanese tractor, his third. He's added a metal super-frame to protect it from the trunks and branches of trees he culls from the about to be extensions of his "yard." Several super-heavy duty lawn tractors and their grass cutting and brushing implements sit waiting for the next assignment. The walls are hung with heavy duty ropes and pulleys, the shelves neatly arranged with numerous tools, each in every size, for maintaining the machinery that aide in the probably unimaginable numbers and kinds of projects Jim has completed over the years to bring his property to its current state.



It's almost impossible to exaggerate anything about Jim's accomplishments on Rush Island Lake. It's a reminder of the story of a preacher who stops to admire a prosperous farm. He says to the farmer pitching hay, "You and God certainly have accomplished a lot here."

"Yes," the farmer replies, "but you should have seen it when God was working on it by himself."

If the place wasn't so obviously carved out of the woods, it might be possible to think this is the way it's always been or should be. Just as if the Twin Cities were always there on the banks of the Mississippi.

No matter what forest management and lake shore property mean from different points of view, Jim's place does show what man and God can do together.

Jim and Julene raised six children in the White Bear Lake area, a northeast suburb of St. Paul. An important part of this family's history for the past fifty-five years has been this 28 acre plot on the southwest shore of Rush Island Lake.

In the 1950's when Jim, his family and hunting and fishing buddies first started coming up to this spot, it was a resort-hunting camp with several modest cabins.

As the years went on, the resort went up for sale in the 1980's, Jim and a friend bought it together. What began as a practical way to own the place became impractical, and Jim bought out his friend.

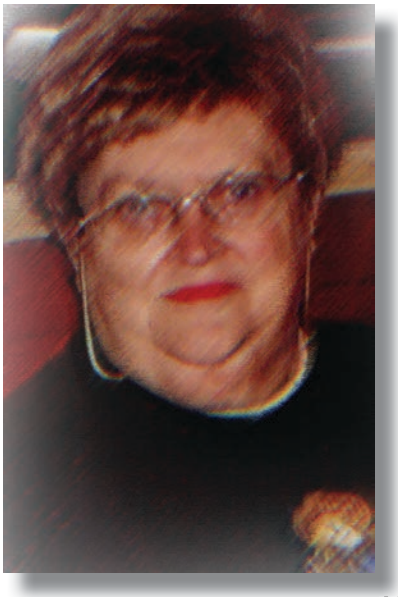
What Jim has put into developing this property makes it clear that most other cabin owners, summer residents, play at woodsman-ship. Leave a place for a few seasons and nature reclaims it. A local handyman with a chainsaw might cut a few trees that spoil the view or threaten to fall across the driveway or on the roof. A few dogwood bushes might be transplanted to block out the neighbor. The shoreline cleared of reeds and cattails for a beach.

Or worse, a bulldozer might to go the other extreme and turn lakeshore into a city lot. The fertilized lawn goes down to the beach, the shoreline erodes, and the cabin is razed to make way for a climate-controlled log-lodge where families watch their plasma TV's and sit in the hot tub.

The Delesha compound is an alternative for those looking for a multi-decade project that makes the wild livable by enhancing the natural attributes which draw people to northern Minnesota in the first place.

There are no bulldozer blade scars. A rock outcropping Jim admittedly gave some thought to dynamiting remains. The land's gently rolling contours separate and pull together the many unique natural and man made features Jim has carefully added or preserved over the years. It's become an open invitation to stroll, to pause, and to marvel at each feature nature provided and Jim improved.

At first it was partridge and deer hunting. After the purchase, cabins were demolished and a large mobile home accidentally burned down on November 3, 1990 – just thirty feet from the log home being built at the time. It's not clear the cause and his kids who were staying there at the time don't talk about it.



Jim is an electrician and has had help from his sons. His memories include steam rising from the lake and beaver dams that killed trees in the swamp. Once a moose was stuck in the bog and was being eaten alive. Jim put it out of its misery.

In 1902 the Campbells logged Buck Lake and blazed the trail that comes right by the Delesha house. It ended on County 4 and Highway 36, just a trail to get between lakes.

Now the property is settled. Jim can spend an entire day mowing grass or, in the fall, vacuuming up three dozen loads of leaves. Jim wonders how the pioneers made it.

END DELESHA

The **Felts** Family

By Bernie Troje

Sue is out in the yard as Pam and Caryl and I drive up with the trunk full of fragile baby's breath. We have been busy most of the day gathering and delivering. Well, hunting, gathering, and delivering. The best part is the delivering.

"Over here," Sue beckons.

We walk through trees heavy with the smells of summer, our arms sprouting branches and tiny pink and white blossoms.

"Right here," Sue calls again as we carefully place the flowers on the deck of the Felts' cabin. This cabin is on high ground and intimate. It commands the rugged view of the lake toward Arrowhead (Starr) Island, willing its response to the whims and desires of those who live inside. Many of our cabins are too far removed to hear the subtle sounds of the movement of the lake in early spring, the uneasy shifting, the shoving and flexing, the ominous moans and low groans followed by a sharp crack, a rifle shot of ice-crack killing winter's hold on Wahatowongong, the Lake of Sandy Shores. The Felts' cabin, however, is on a high bluff right above the shore.

"We don't own the lake," says Nancy, Sue's daughter, "but this part, this Felts' Bank, this is ours."

Nancy is an almost-every-summer Minnesotan and has been for many years. She shows us the loft in the sleeping house they have recently remodeled to accommodate the growing families. Improvements. "The fact is," Nancy explains, "we don't want it to change much. The years twist one way and another, but here, this place, this remains a constant in our lives.

"Dad was such a magnet. Family and friends are drawn here. We have as many as 15 guests at one time – and they stay for several days. People don't drive from Illinois or Colorado just to join us for dinner."

Sue adds, "Yet this place adjusts and settles in to make all of us comfortable. Age doesn't matter. Numbers don't matter. It has always been like that. It has been like that for over 50 years."

"My sister Sara feels that way, too." Nancy gestures toward the lane, "The pines always welcome us into the driveway. They wave and sometimes they remember our names. 'Sara – Nancy'."

"Saaaara - Naaaanceeee."

Sara is Nancy's younger sister. Her family says she could walk these paths on a dark night without a flashlight.

They have heard the birches whisper sweet spring secrets to each other, rustling quietly as the sisters pass Meyers' Corner.

Who among us has not been stirred by highflying Canadas gabbling overhead, the wild wailing loon, the lovely notes of a robin calling for rain? In that thin line between twilight and full dark there are silences so profound in their timing that one can hear the earth settle. On a late summer evening the birds are quiet, the fishermen are home, the grasses stop rubbing one another's shoulders, the lake calms, the gossipy trees sign off for the day, and if you sit quietly there is silence, real silence, the kind where you can almost hear the blood coursing through your veins.

Nancy serves iced tea and rhubarb cake. She adds a lemon slice to each tall glass. Then, reflectively, she says, "Each summer when I return, it's a reunion. I walk these well-worn paths and get reacquainted with the trees. I visit with them. I ask them how their winter was. They tell me things, show me new scars, like antler scratches and lightning strikes. They brag about a young shoot, or complain about a wound in the bark hammered deep by a pileated woodpecker. Then, when I'm not paying proper attention, the gnarled old basswood just off the trail breathes a wonderfully familiar fragrance on my face. I stop and take it in. 'I missed you,' I say. 'I've missed you very much'."

This is the Warren Felts' family of musicians. Music busies and fills their lives. They perform, they

PLAYING JAZZ ON a Mississippi River boat awaits Warren Felts for the winter months after spending summers in Itasca County. Felts, of Aurora, Ill., who has been "summering" here for the past 40 years, stated that he had missed only one summer since 1946, and when he started playing locally with a combo at the Island View Lodge in 1950, he met and became friends with the late Matt Miltich of Grand Rapids. He dedicated his last number to his late friend. Felts was one of the participants playing to a standing room only crowd at the Bass Brook Community Center on Oct. 5 when the Independent Order of Foresters held their potluck supper and talent show.

Music busies and fills their lives. They perform, they teach, and they encourage young musicians. They talk a lot about music.

teach, and they encourage young musicians. They talk a lot about music.

The youngest are the fourth generation of Felts' to come to Sand Lake for the summers. Why are they here? Maybe they need a break from musical demands, the schedules, the gnawing reminder that one more practice will make the performance even better. But maybe not. Maybe these musicians are drawn here by the rhythm of the sounds and the silences in this North Country. Have you ever been asked to stand still and listen when you didn't hear anything? Picture this – It is the last week of August, and there is a low and heavy harvest moon, smoky orange and oval-shaped, hanging just above the trees on the opposite shore.

"Listen," Warren was the kind of person who……..

Finally we hear it, the high tremor of Indian song carried by the ebb and flow of evening water lapping, lapping, swelling in volume as the dusk thickens and dies away. We are on the Inger wave length. The Chippewa are celebrating a harvest of wild rice and give-away. The drums, the dancers, the high voices of the singers pow-wow their gratitude. The message is clear: "Meguitch. Thank you. It was a very good year!"

Sue recalls the early days of fishing when 6 o'clock p.m. meant that everyone should be on the water. Serious fishing was scheduled for 7 – 9 p.m. Often people became acquainted boat-to-boat. They would fish and visit and reel in a new friend in the process of stalking a walleye.

Indeed, that's how Warren learned of Island View's nice new dance floor and the possibility of an engagement for his dance combo. He talked with Milt Etsch, the proprietor of Island View, and landed a job for the summer of 1950. The combo consisted of three Aurora musicians: Jim Murphy on sax and clarinet, Eddie somebody on guitar, Warren Felts on string bass, and two musicians (a drummer, and an accordion player) from Grand Rapids. They played several nights a week at Island View Lodge sparking the Golden Age of Sand Lake Elegance with white linen dining and dancing lakeside until 2 a.m., a Tommy Bartlett Water Ski Show on Sunday afternoons and a chef from Chicago who had cooked for someone who had cooked for Al Capone or John Dillinger or Pretty Boy Floyd. (Not true in any case, but in every case, good for business.) People here loved to dance. Warren and his band played Finnish polkas and Scandinavian waltzes, but soon discovered that the dancers warmed up to ballroom dips and whirls as the band played Deep Purple, You Made Me Love You, or It Had to Be You. An evening of dancing generally ended with I'll See You In My Dreams.

We asked to see Sue's caning projects. She has been caning chairs for many years. She is a master caner, a fantastic cook, and a blessing to her children.

Warren and Sue brought their children here. They brought up their children here, too, in the way of the woods. Children's memories include getting ice for the icebox from the ice houses at Chapel Hill or Cedar Lake Lodge, card games by kerosene lamplight, dreary days warmed by a fire in a potbellied stove, berry-picking, clearing trees with a two-man cross-cut and axe, leaky roofs, a cabin fire and a futile bucket brigade from the lake. They remember building a fire pit and the outhouse. They remember priming the water pump and hauling buckets of water to make pin cherry-blueberry jelly. They remember the hills between Chapel Hill and Spring Lake and the places a car might get mired up to its axels after a good summer rain.

They remember the evening settlings that are a metaphor for musicians who understand rests. Rests give form and meaning to the sounds that surround them. Rests tell you that something important has happened.

There is the full orchestra of the swamp on an April night. First, a few high soprano soloists piping in the peepers; then, the tremulous song of the faint at heart gradually gathering momentum and volume, then the tuning up of the bass section here and there and finally a full grand crescendo as they all join together. This was the music before we knew there was music.

Musicians hear the gurgle, gurgle around a swamped row boat, the whoosh wings of the mallard, the spank of the beaver's tail and the drone of a horsefly in September. Musicians hear the heavy sighs of the Norways as they brace themselves for yet another summer storm. Musicians hear the songs.

Perhaps we are all musicians in degree.

Warren didn't want this country to change. He feared the losses that came with paved roads, clear-cutting the forests, straightening the curves, shaving off the hills. He wanted no Felt-way Beltway on Loon Feather Lane.

He left us with a great admonition, "Lean into the music," he said. "Listen slowly. It takes time to breathe it in."

END FELTS

Rick & Ruth **Hauck**

By Elinor Wright

"As a kid I liked places a lot wilder than my backyard. Both Ruthie and I liked the idea of living in the country.

In early June 2003, rumors were that a couple from Illinois (or was it Michigan?) had bought the Johnson Place on Little Sand. There was a lot of buzz but no one seemed to know the whole story.

No matter. It didn't take long to find out that Ruth and Rick Hauck belong here. They are outdoors people who enjoy the rugged demands of "Living North." What's more, they plan to stay. Neither of them wants to do all that packing up again.

Rick's love of the outdoor life began early, "As a kid I liked places a lot wilder than my backyard. Both Ruthie and I liked the idea of living in the country. We moved a couple times, raised our family, found that my job (lineman for Commonwealth Edison of Illinois) took more and more of my time. The dream, however, prevailed, and now we live in northern Minnesota, "real country.""

It is an overcast November afternoon. Deer hunting is in the second day. Both Ruth and Rick are at the door inviting Martie Wilson and me (Elinor Wright) into their attractive, welcoming home.

Soon we are at the kitchen table drinking hot coffee and enjoying Ruth's banana cream pie. We try to take in all that we see around us. Then we ask for a tour.

In the dining room, we are suddenly aware of seven children smiling down at us from Grand Portraits that line the wall. This is the heart of the Hauck home. Ruth introduces us to each one of the grandchildren adding a sentence or two to get us fully acquainted.

A few more steps into the ash-paneled living room and lo! There are other magnificent creatures looking down on us from high places. There is a cinnamon black bear from Bettles, Alaska, an antelope from Wyoming, a wood duck from Illinois, and three bear skulls: one from Alaska, one from Wisconsin, and one from Michigan. There are three deer mounted over the entry door (Ruth's), and there's a 10-pound walleye looking at us sideways and wishing he were still swimming in the quiet cove of Lake Erie. There's another buck that Rick shot and antlers of a 10-point puck he'd shot over at Byron's (Ames) place last year. This is a sportsman's haven of memories of the wild. Both Ruth and Rick are hunters but they rarely hunt together. They explain that hunting a wild animal by one's self in a rugged place, traveling alone, provides a source of excitement unlike any other. Alone, one's senses are sharpened, keen and alert to the sounds and surprises of life in the wilderness. One pays attention. Penalties can be severe and unrelenting to the casual and the unprepared.

"Ruth, where were these deer shot?" we asked.

Ruth paused, remembering, "Illinois, Wyoming, Michigan, and Minnesota."

Rick went on to share that, in their first year here in Sand Lake, Rick already had an application in to hunt in Wyoming and went out there to hunt during our deer season here. Ruth stayed here and went hunting in their woods and shot a buck that got wedged under a log. She called Rick out in Wyoming to see what she should do. Ken Libersky and Kathy McGibbon came over and helped her get it out from under the log. Curt and Erick Carlson helped her hang it up in the garage with a boat anchor rope. Rick said, "I have hundreds of feet of rope out in the shed, but who knew Ruthie would need it to hang a deer while I was gone?"

It was an afternoon for stories - chilly, snow flurries, gusty Canadian winds. Inside, a deep chair

and good company. Ruth refilled the coffee cups for the third time and the stories began.

Rick told of a hunting trip he and a friend went on in Alaska. The pilot flew them out to a remote lake, and as he circled the lake, the pilot pointed out a trapper's cabin and boat and said they could use the boat to do some trout fishing. Almost every cast of the line brought a trout, and after catching four or five, they took them to shore and cleaned them and put them in Rick's backpack. They watched a caribou swim across the lake and head off into the woods and circled around to find it. Then they heard bears splashing near their camping area and came back to find Rick's backpack gone (with his spare ammo, hunting license, money, plane tickets inside). They searched the area and found the bears had drug his backpack off into the middle of the swamp and left it.

On another hunting trip, Rick and a young fellow named Brad hunted on a lake, and Rick told Brad to stay near camp and Rick would walk around the lake through the tall brush and look for moose. Brad caught sight of a bear that was watching Rick and shot it, hitting it in the foot. The wounded bear, only 50 to 100 feet away from Rick, roared in pain. Brad shot again and it roared some more. He shot it again and it fell dead. That was a close call!

Rick shared another close call that took place on his first and only expedition to Alaska with friend Jerry from Canada. One of them shot a moose and they cut it up and put in cloth bags to pack it out. There was a 1,000 ft. hill to climb up and five miles to hike back to camp. While they were packing the moose on their backs, they heard an "oooph" sound and looked up to see a bear on a dead run right at them. Rick was the only one with a gun at the time and shot at the bear. When it went down it was only 13 steps away from them.

Rick and Ruth began hunting together in South Dakota, but soon discovered that walking together made too much noise in the woods. So Ruth got a rifle, and Rick left her in one spot to hunt. He went to another, with the admonition that if she saw two deer walking together to pay attention to the second deer because that was probably the buck. That was in 1984. When Ruth shot her first deer there, it was traumatic for her. Ruth said she was never going to hunt again and tore up her hunting license. But the next year came, and she went hunting again with Rick. He dropped her off in her 'spot' and walked about 500 yards when he heard a shot. She'd already dropped her deer.

One of the most dangerous hunting experiences Rick had was a trip to Manitoba, north of Swan Lake on his first hunt with friend Jerry. They hunted 16 miles off the road on a logging trail, and for two weeks the temperature never got above 20 below zero. They had a big box in the truck that they hauled their gear in and put it inside the tent on it's side. One person would sleep in the box and the other would sleep in a lawn chair and keep the fire going all night. They would take their Coleman cook stove outside the tent to light. One cold morning, Jerry pumped up the stove, lit it and it caught fire and caught the tent on fire and everything burned up. The stove had leaked fluid all night and there was fuel everywhere. Rick's feet were so cold he had trouble walking. But they walked and walked until they literally stumbled on a locked cabin. They pried the hasp off the cabin door, went inside and built a fire to warm up. Their truck wouldn't start after sitting for days at 20 below, so they took the battery inside the cabin to warm it up and then it started. They shot their deer 20 miles from the car, and in the morning a big tanker truck came by and took them into town to see if the cab driver was sober enough to drive them out to where their car was.

They would take their Coleman cook stove outside the tent to light. One cold morning, Jerry pumped up the stove, lit it and it caught fire and caught the tent on fire and everything burned up.

"Is the risk part of the fun?" Elinor asked Rick.

"No, normally it's nice to go out and hunt for what you're after and then go home."

On his Alaska trip, the pilot who dropped them off required all the money up front – the money to drop them off, to pick them up and for one extra trip. When they got dropped off, he wondered, "What's to bring that pilot back? He's already got all our money."

On that trip, Rick and his friends shot a bear and a moose and spent 3 to 4 days packing the meat out. Rick packed to the top of the hill and the others packed down to the hunting site for the rest. Rick gave the others his rifle for protection, and then as he packed the meat up the hill and down for more, he realized he was in danger from bears or wolves too, and with no protection. So, he spent a lot of time singing loudly, "I've Been Working on the Railroad."

Ruth shared that once she went hunting with her niece. Ruth had a hard time hearing the deer, but her niece heard a noise and said, "What's that noise?" They turned around, and there was a deer walking. Ruth shot it. The deer fell and she was so excited. She ran up and kept circling the deer to make sure it was dead. Rick had given her a whistle to use as a signal, but he had put some toilet paper in it to keep it from rattling while they walked. When she blew the whistle it didn't work and only made a "whooo-whooo" that was not very loud, but Rick heard her and came to help.

One scary hunt for Ruth was in South Dakota. She had to walk to a stand that was two miles away and a bobcat followed her.

Rick and Ruth went on an adventure with a DNR employee to tag bears hibernating in bear dens near Remer, Minnesota. After tagging, the DNR can fly over and map where the bears are roaming.

The two that Ruth and Rick looked for were orphans from the year before. They were released in different places to find their own den. Rick said one year a fellow snow mobiling in Duluth stopped for a break and saw a bear hibernating in an eagle's nest high off the ground.

Elinor asked Ruth and Rick, "We know who you are. Who do you think you are?" Rick replied, "Two of the luckiest people in the world. Passing through. Paid our dues. Raised children. Now enjoying life."

When asked what they think the reason was that it all turned out this way for them, Rick shrugged his shoulders and said, "We worked hard; we were good people who don't go out of our way to cause trouble nor walk away from it either. The Lord has blessed us with each other and a good family."

"What brings vitality to your life?"

"In order to be active you have to know people. You can't just end up sitting home. We like people and like interacting with people," Rick responded. "This may sound corny, but we like helping people. And about Ruth's position as President of the Evergreen Friendship Club, "As soon as they told her she could use the gavel, she was right there."

When asked what they would like to have as a legacy to their kids, their community and to the world, Rick's reply was, "If somebody remembered me and said 'yeah, he was okay!" And Ruth said, "Being remembered for the good things you've done. I would hope my kids think I'm the best mom and hope the grand-kids remember me, too."

"The grandkids get to spend quality time here with us. They don't bring their toys or computers so we have captive kids doing exciting things like fishing and swimming.

Special things they cherish about this area are friends and the openness of people. They've only been here four years and see people in nearby towns that they know. "Even the guy that installs garage doors remembers me," said Rick. And, of course, the fishing and hunting are good.

They enjoy a trip once in awhile but always want to come home. They feel an enthusiasm for life here. It's a better life experience. Everyday they get up and have things to do. Ruth loves going to North School where she volunteers one day a week, reading to children in the first and second grade.

Elinor asked if, in their hunting adventures, they equate excitement with fear. Rick replied that he felt fear and excitement were both adrenaline rushes. He continues, "It depends on what you like. Catching fish, helping someone. Sometimes you don't know what it is, but you like being able to do things."

On religious differences, they feel no matter what religion you are, if you truly believe it…. Good people can live together forever. If you are a good Christian, Jew, Muslim, it means you are a good person. You don't have to profess any certain religion to make the world a better place.

Ruth adds, "When the door opens, God is going to greet you, and you shouldn't be afraid of what's beyond that door."

They agreed that time's too short to do everything we want to do. They hope their time here is a healthy time.

They feel that nature plays an important part in our lives. Landscape and experience combine to tell us certain places are special. Remembering those times at those places makes them ours. They are our private property. We share them with each other.

Does imagination play a part in your life? Rick replies, "Everyday. If you don't have dreams to think about, you might as well sit and watch Oprah on TV." Rick and Ruth look at life as stepping stones leading somewhere. If they carry someone along with them, it enriches the trip.

"This may sound corny, but we like helping people. And about Ruth's position as President of the Evergreen Friendship Club, "As soon as they told her she could use the gavel, she was right there."

Rick and Ruth shared that they really never had the opportunity before, but when they had the chance to move, they did. He worked as a lineman, and Ruth was a high school secretary and church secretary. They never belonged to many organizations before. Now Ruth is Social Director for the Township and President of Evergreen Friendship club. She belongs to the Committee on Aging, is 'Solicitor General' of Ducks Unlimited and a school volunteer. Rick is Vice President of the Lake Association, Treasurer of their church, Chairman of the Township Board, and a committee person for Ducks Unlimited.

Elinor asked how they best celebrate life, and Rick responded, “By doing the best you can everyday you are here. I can’t remember the last time we just sat around. Everyday there are things to do. If we’re here tomorrow morning there is something more to do. We can’t make a difference by sitting on the bench. We’ve gotta be in the game.”

Later that evening Ruth called to tell us she had gotten her deer that afternoon, a spike buck.

To conclude, Rick said: “These hunting trips feed that part of me that hungers for and is refreshed by natural beauty. Whenever I hear a deer snort, feel the pull of a walleye on my line, cross an unbridled river or observe the splendor of an early winter sunset – experiences like these reaffirm my belief in the wild places and the importance of protecting them.”

Ruth finished, “The take-home message from this interview is that in our case we are able to experience something first hand, something new as if we were early explorers. We discover things. We learn the lessons that wanderings teach. What better gift to leave our grandchildren? Now, more than ever, it pays to look around. Now, more than ever, it is important to learn to see what’s here.”

Matt **Korpela** Horseshoe Champ

By Bernie Troje

Before sunset when they started strumming their guitars, cowboys, perhaps a bit bored, might have tossed a few horseshoes. Wherever it started has come a game and competition on the state and national levels. Also, our own local champion.

In many ways, he's right out of the 1950's, – a wholesome kid, from a nurturing family, growing up with neighborhood activities and school opportunities. He's everything you don't read about in the newspapers nowadays let alone see on TV. Even more amazing, he gives his father and teachers lots of credit for his achievements.

Meet Matt Korpela, an unassuming young man you'd be proud to call your son.

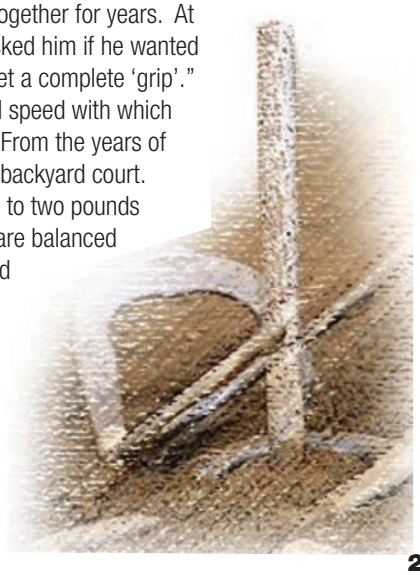
For a nineteen year old, he's quite mature. He has solid traditional values he seems to live by. He laughs easily, and though he has lots to boast about, he doesn't. But he does know why he's been successful and how he plans to use his success in his life and education. Indeed, he's able to articulate all this quite well for someone who's just graduated from high school.

You may know that in 2005 Matt at the age of fifteen won the World Championship in horseshoe competition. It turns out he likes to be challenged by anything that requires concentration, and he's applied this skill to horseshoe competition and engineering courses at Itasca Community College. What is usually a diversion for older men at family picnics has had a profound impact on this young man's life.

His first World was in 2001 in Hibbing. Competing in Class I, he and Daryl Carlson, his partner, took third. For years, the two, along with Wilfred Korpela, Matt's father, and Gerald Stangland practiced at Cedar Lake horseshoe club.

Matt's father and Stangland have pitched horseshoes together for years. At the age of six or seven, as Matt watched them, his dad asked him if he wanted to learn the "nicks." May says, "It took me two years to get a complete 'grip'." That includes such things as step speed, the strength and speed with which you pitch, and the clincher, keeping your eye on the peg. From the years of practice, Matt's footprints are engraved in the lawn of his backyard court.

Horseshoes vary in weight from two pounds six ounces to two pounds twelve ounces. They have a three inch gap tip to tip and are balanced in the middle. The metal can be "dead soft," bendable and cushioning; "medium soft," longer lasting; and "dead hard." One shoe that isn't the typical horseshoe design is the "ringless single," a giant hook on one tip and no hook on the other. Most players use the Diamond shoe which cost $30.00 and up. Matt tosses a Ted Allen horseshoe. He buys a new pair each season for about $60.00 to $70.00. The Ted Allen is named for the world champion from the 1930's.



Link2ourpast

Wilbur Wright was sitting at the table during Matt's interview, and coincidentally, in the 1930's, he lived down the street from Ted Allen in Boulder, Colorado. He was aware of Allen's prominence in the sport, and he actually shook Allen's hand. Matt was completely blown away by this. The trophy trailer set up at competitions displays Ted Allen's long career as a horseshoe champion. Matt's been through the trailer many times.

The horseshoe court Matt competes on is clay, according to regulations. Other courts are sand. To him the surface makes no difference. In fact, Matt isn't even concerned about whether or not he has a home field advantage. The courts have two pegs either thirty or forty feet apart in six by three foot boxes. Next to them are the cement pads for players. Juniors, under eighteen and elders over sixty pitch at thirty feet. Adults at forty. Matt won world as a junior and has had to adjust as an adult, initially over-throwing horseshoes as he made the transition.

Stangland, now 60, who lives on Little Sand in the summer and has been Matt's partner, has become an elder as Matt has become an adult.

Matt's sister Nicole has kept a scrapbook of his horseshoe competition. Besides winning world in Bakersfield, California in 2005, he took third in his class in 2001 (or 2000?) in the Hibbing tournament. That was junior competition. His entry average was pitching 19% ringers, but he pitched 40% in the competition.

World is held mid-July to early-August. State follows in early September. Ever since he was twelve, Matt has gone to every state and world competition. Matt's not sure why, but horseshoe competition is much greater in Minnesota.

The state tournament is held in Genola, a twin city to Pierz, on Highway 25 south of Brainerd. It lasts two to four days and draws about one hundred competitors. Usually two to three hundred spectators attend. Matt, his father, Stangland, and Carlson go down the day before and practice all night. Stangland has been entrusted with the key to the building with the courts. Matt says, "I'm not gonna lie. It's really fun."

In Bakersfield they had an actual stadium for the competition. World's a round robin tournament that lasts two weeks. Everyone plays each other, throwing so many shoes per game, all finishing about the same time. The best compete last. The 2007 World was in Hardmore, Oklahoma. Matt and his father stay in a tent in a campground near the tournaments.

Matt doesn't train off season, but starting late March, he practices two weeks straight. He said it usually takes thirty pitches "to get back into [the] groove. It's the timing and release. Matt says, "The very second it [the horseshoe] leaves your hand, you'll know if it's a ringer. Your whole body will know it."

Practice develops the skill. Learning to concentrate makes the difference between winning or not in competitions. Your opponent can, according to Matt "get inside [your] head" with a simple comment. His dad provided the distractions while Matt practiced, even to the extent of mooning him. He played most sports in high school but still feels

"horseshoes is the hardest thing [he's] worked at." Horseshoes, he says, "is a mental game……. It's you against yourself."

Matt likes the challenge of concentrating. At Blackduck High School he had a rigorous science teacher who never gave the answer until every student had worked out the problem. He says, "The funnest time in high school…..was working on those problems." The quality of his math and science courses, especially physics, taught him to focus. That has been the ideal preparation for not only his horseshow competition but also his engineering courses at ICC. He wants to major in aeronautical or mechanical engineering.

Horseshoe competition has also made Matt "more of a people person… [He] used to be a really shy young man." He meets lots of people and competes mostly against older adults.

As a twelve or thirteen year old, "I tried hustling once," Matt confessed. His friend Daryl and he showed up at a horseshoe tournament sponsored by Richie's bar in Marcel. It was the beginning and end of his hustling career. At first the other guys were poking fun at him. In competition, however, Daryl "threw a double doll. I threw a double back," Matt said. Someone in the crowd said, "Wait a minute!" But the game was over in twelve shoes.

Matt said, "They were definitely rather angry. You could tell by the snotty little side comments." He and Daryl felt pretty bad about it afterwards. He says he probably won't ever hustle again, especially at Richie's. "I'm pretty sure they're still angry," Matt said.

Consistent with his distaste for hustling is his feeling that only a "dirty player" tries to dislodge an opponent's ringer. His motto is "Don't play dirty. Play fair." He earns his twenty-one points playing by the rules.

Actually his pitch is an unorthodox reverse three-quarters. In world competition only six or seven players pitch this. [His uncle Eddy thought his reverse would keep him from being competitive.] What his dad hoped to teach him was the conventional one-and-a-quarter turn. These styles refer to turns the shoe makes in the air. With this one exception of Matt's individuality, he was his dad's student. "Not to gloat," says Matt, "My dad got [me] to the point where he couldn't beat me…. I think he beat me once this year [2007], maybe twice last year, and three times the year before."

Matt's perfected his technique: the timing of his release; the low trajectory of the shoe (the horseshoe sometimes brushes his own shoe), and, of course, the concentration which shuts out the distractions in competition. Matt says, "The very second it leaves [my] hand I'll know if it's a ringer….. It'll make the same sound every time it hits." Before the state tournament he practices all night.

...taught him to focus. That has been the ideal preparation for not only his horseshow competition but also his engineering courses at ICC. He wants to major in aeronautical or mechanical engineering

Matt participates in the world and state tournaments each year. The state is two to three days, and he throws one hundred shoes a day. The world lasts two to three weeks with hundreds of participants and two to three thousand spectators. Asked whether the world has a big purse, he said, "Oh no, Dude, you just about have to do it for fun." It was $1,000.00 the year Matt took first. He wishes someone would offer one million dollars for a forty shoe perfect game. This, he feels, would attract more competitors, spectators, and coverage. Though some efforts have been made, horseshoes is not an Olympic game yet. Matt said very few Chinese participate in the competitions.

And, of course, there's school. A bureaucratic snafu at ICC kept Matt from getting a room his freshman year in the engineering dorm, but he's very happy with his off-campus apartment and roommates, none of whom is a student and all are older. "They're awesome," he says. It doesn't bother him that they've been known to wake him up to talk when they come home from a late night of partying. His engineering advisor loaded him up with classes. Some days begin at 9:00 a.m. and end at 9:00 p.m. In addition to his engineering classes, he's taking philosophy and sociology.

Matt credits his horseshoe competition with a long list of achievements. It's helped him "adjust" an anger problem he once had. It's made him more a people person. Because of his first place in world, he says, "All these people [he doesn't know] come up to me and talk to me. I'd always get all red [in front of people]." He meets lots of people now, competes against mostly older adults, and even enjoys his celebrity. Horseshoes has certainly been an integral part of Matt's life. Because of it, he's closer to his family; he has a network of adult friends; and his ability to focus, to concentrate, continues to help him do well in his courses. The aspiring student he has become attests to his hard work, his enthusiasm for taking on challenges, and, indeed, his awareness of how his skills and talents can best serve him. His self-assurance means some day he'll be an aeronautical engineer. And, of course, Matt Korpela's plans certainly include continued participation in horseshoe competition on all levels.

END KAPELLA

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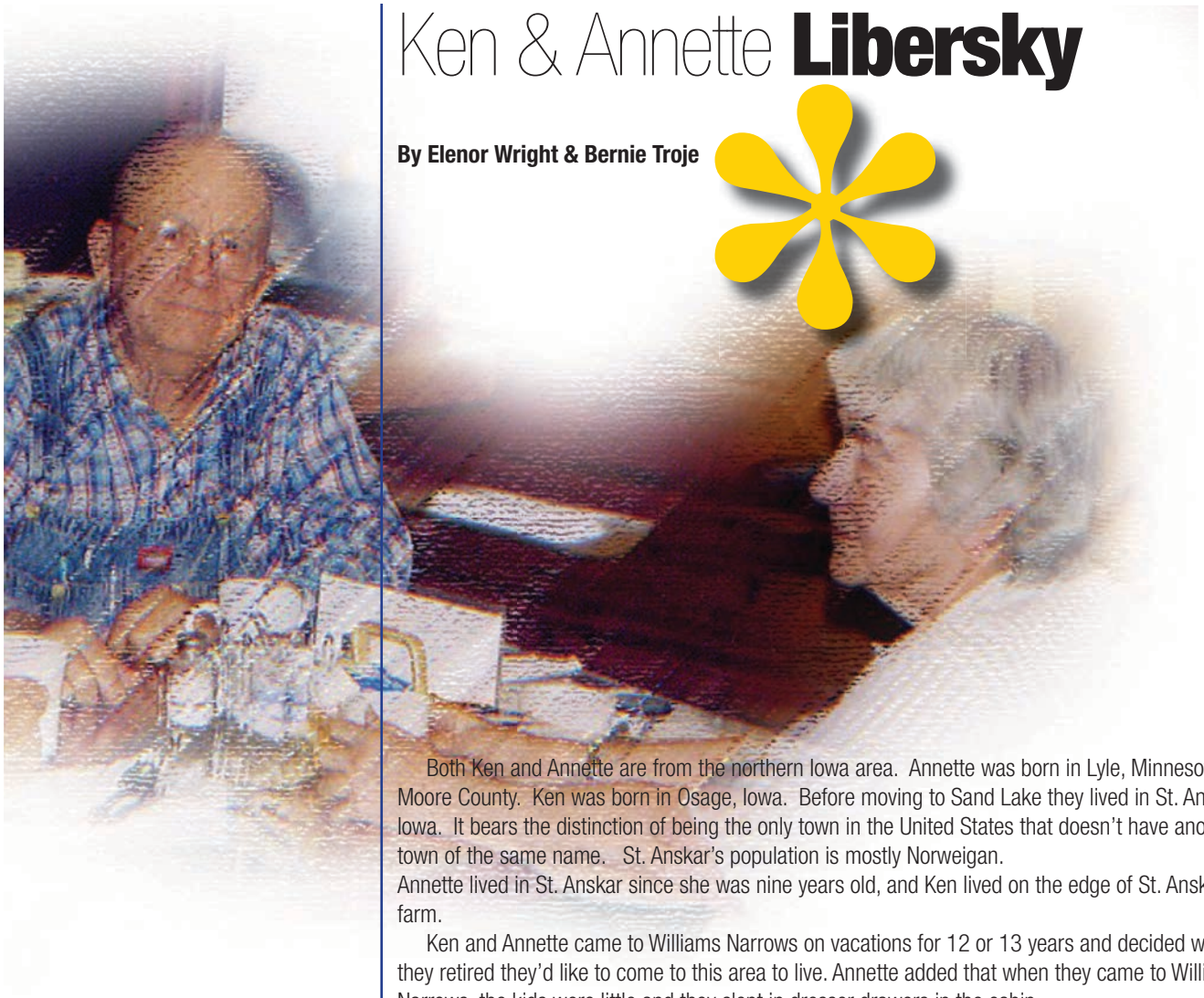

Ken & Annette **Libersky**

By Elenor Wright & Bernie Troje

Both Ken and Annette are from the northern Iowa area. Annette was born in Lyle, Minnesota in Moore County. Ken was born in Osage, Iowa. Before moving to Sand Lake they lived in St. Anskar, Iowa. It bears the distinction of being the only town in the United States that doesn't have another town of the same name. St. Anskar's population is mostly Norweigan.
Annette lived in St. Anskar since she was nine years old, and Ken lived on the edge of St. Anskar on a farm.

Ken and Annette came to Williams Narrows on vacations for 12 or 13 years and decided when they retired they'd like to come to this area to live. Annette added that when they came to Williams Narrows, the kids were little and they slept in dresser drawers in the cabin.
In 1978 they found the lot on Little Sand Lake and bought it from Jack Minehart who owned other lots there, too. It was nothing but brush.

When they bought it the title search was all fine. When, however, their neighbor, Dean Dewberry purchased his, the Native issues came up and he helped out the neighborhood by getting the whole point a clear title. On Dewberry's property, one of the original owners had either a retarded or crippled child who was left out of the claim, and they had to go way back and clear that up. Annette actually has a drawing of the different lots at the time and will share a copy.

Ken and Annette were completely happy with the decision to move up to Little Sand Lake, Annette said that she hasn't been happier. Iowa has changed since people cut all the trees, made more hog lots, and it isn't the same. Ken added that he used to go pheasant hunting along the fence lines and now there are no more fence lines.

Ken retired in 1985. While he still worked, they would come up on Friday nights and arrive about midnight and work on the place all day Saturday and part of Sunday and then drive back home.
Ken and Annette started building their house in 1982 and lived in a trailer for about four years while they built. One night a big wind storm came up, and a huge branch fell on the trailer roof. Ken told Annette, "If we're going to stay here, it won't be in the trailer."

The Libersky's have three daughters. Anne is the youngest and lives in Wells, Minnesota. Jane lives in Arizona. Gloria lives in Florida.

Their marriage works, because they have many of the same interests. They both like to fish, although Annette doesn't care to hunt. Ken said he didn't care to sew. Annette added, "Or do dishes, either." The most important reason was having respect for one another.
Ken has a reputation for his strong leadership position in the Sand Lake Community. He's always been more than willing to help anyone and more than willing to do his part. Ken said he used to enjoy it but feels he's getting too old to do very much any more.

Their marriage works, because they have many of the same interests. They both like to fish

They joined Northwoods Chapel because of Hank and Ernie Witt. Then the Witts and Libersky's got together to clean the church.

Annette was involved with the Maxines. The Maxines met about twice a month. Besides quilting, they would go to the nursing home and give a birthday party to residents and take refreshments to them.

Ken served on the Sand Lake Township Board for about ten years. He tried to get people involved in their township government and adds that involvement in local government helps keep the Board of Equalization in our Township instead of making residents go to Grand Rapids to discuss their real estate taxes.

Annette felt our township has had some good Township Clerks: Elaine Rasmussen, Mark Schultz, Annie Knutsen, and Bea Andrews were all good clerks.

Ken's oldest brother, Howard, passed away August 6, 2009 at 95 years old. When his wife was living the two couples did quite a bit of traveling together, and his brother and wife also came up to visit for a couple of weeks each year.

As far as the future is concerned, Annette says they are both fairly healthy for their ages. (Ken has since passed away.) Annette plans on living up here as long as she can. Her kids tell her she will never have to go to a nursing home. They both willed their bodies to Mayo Clinic for research and harvest.

Ken and Annette heard there was such a demand for skin donations for burn victims. "Don't imagine other old (body) parts are too good, but if someone could use some or learn something, that's what it's all about." Willing one's body for research means their body won't be injected or treated the same as other dead people, but will be taken right to Mayo. And it can be up to a year before the family receives the donors ashes for burial.

Ken and Annette's grandson went to college and got a good job with Caterpillar. His dad was a band master so music was in his head. But when he was 10-11 years old, he'd come up to spend the summers and Ken would let him help with all kinds of jobs. Ken would be welding something and find a helmet for his grandson to wear and help him. Ken said, "He's a smart kid and now he's an engineer at Caterpillar."

A few years ago they lost one of their best friends, their dog Tippy. They enjoyed a deer they named Dolly for about four years, and now a deer they've named Susie.

Rick Hauck said that Ken would help anyone in any way that he could. About their involvement in the community, Annette said the most fun contribution was making quilts with the girls (Hank, Olina, Velma, etc.) Ken enjoyed working with the Township. He was a Township Supervisor.) "But things have changed politically, and I can't do as much as I used to. If someone asks me to do something, I'll do it. But if they tell me – I won't do it."

Ken and Annette used to go up to Rainy Lake and rent a house boat for a few weeks each year. Some other couples went with them. Back on Sand Lake, they had two grandkids who fell in and they fished them out of the water, but up on Rainy Lake, a rather large friend fell in and they couldn't get her back up on the boat so had to help her to shore.

The first year Ken and Annette lived up on Little Sand Lake, their house was like a resort. They enjoyed having company, and lots of friends would come up and visit. Nowadays, they only have family. "Can't do the entertaining any more," Annette said. "One time a couple came to visit and Annette put dinner on the table. The husband asked if there was anything else to eat. That couple didn't come back."

Ken told a story about a neighbor. John Stangland bought the lot next to Ken and Annette many years ago, and they hadn't met him yet. A girl from Grand Rapids was missing and was found near Grand Rapids. The kids were up and out fishing with Ken, and when they came in, Annette told Ken there was a rough looking man next door digging a big hole and maybe he was going to bury a body in it. Ken went over to see and John was digging a hole for an out house. Ken got to know Stangland and liked him a lot. Later on, Ken and Annette saw John at the café and John told Annette that he "was kind of a nice guy and he wouldn't kill anybody!"

That's the closest the Libersky's have come to having any real trouble on Little Sand Lake.

END LIBERSKY

Sam **Muntean**
Sand Lake Alliance Church's Pastor

By Bernie Troje

Sometimes we're driven, sometimes we're led. Pastor Sam Muntean would probably say he was led to found the Sand Lake Christian & Missionary Alliance Church: somewhat by the community; somewhat by the success and growth of the building fund and diverse congregation; but probably most, he would say, by the spirit, the Holy Spirit.

When they started, they had saved $18,000. In 1990-91 they had blueprints, an excavated lot, a structure with floorboards and most of the interior. They finished the original building debt free.

Pastor Sam and his wife Wendy were living at Edgewater Resort in 1986 when Clarence Davis suggested starting up a church in the Sand Lake Community Center. Sam had recently been pastor of Dora Lake Alliance Church, a church in Northome and chaplain at Northome Nursing Home. His wife Wendy was a teacher at Squaw Lake Elementary School. This made it possible to get things started at the Community Center.

Thirteen people came to the first service. Clarence and Gladys Davis, Glen and Evelyn Huntsley, and Patricia Smeltzer. The rest were relatives: Wendell and Betty Murphy (Wendy's parents), Pastor Sam, Wendy, their children Sam and Jeannie and Wendy's two nieces, Melissa and Stacy.

At 9:30 a.m., they would get all set up, have coffee, tea, snacks and fellowship. At 10 a.m., the service would begin. After the service, there would be more coffee, tea, snacks and fellowship. People began coming from around the area because church was one place they could all get together and visit and share their week with one another.

The Sand Lake Community Center supervisors agreed to "rent" the Community Center for $15 a week for five years and then the church had to make a decision about building a church. Having church at the Community Center also helped the Community Center to start operating "in the black" for the first time.

Township interaction was good. In fact, there was more involvement in the township. Having church there made the community more aware of the center.

When the church first started, the township asked Sam and Wendy to plan activities for the area. They started with hayrides. Sam was partly responsible for the 4th of July Pie and Ice Cream Social getting started. "I really like pie," he chuckled. The Pie and Ice Cream Social still takes place every 4th of July.

The church set a goal to build a church at the end of the five years. Erick and Vi Carlson donated the property (the church now sits on) and Clayton Andrews donated another piece of property for a parsonage across County 4. Erick told Sam that all his life he thought there should be a little community with a little church right where it is.

By that time 25 to 30 people were attending, the congregation made a decision that when they had saved $10,000 they would begin building. Their motto from the beginning was "Trust in the Lord from board to board."

When they started, they had saved $18,000. In 1990-91 they had blueprints, an excavated lot, a structure with floorboards and most of the interior. They finished the original building debt free.

One day during the building of the original part of the church, Treasurer Jack Houchins called Pastor Sam and asked, "Are we ready for sheet rock yet?"

Pastor Sam answered, "Yes, why?"

Jack answered, "Believe it or not a truck carrying a load of sheetrock spilled its load here in front of the corner store in Squaw Lake. They are not going to reload the truck and are willing to sell the 14

foot sheets for $1.00 a sheet. How many do we need?"

They bought 250 sheets. Jack's son and a friend were there and loaded it up and brought it to the church.

As it turned out, the sheetrock truck was driving south on Highway 46. A car stopped in front of it to make a turn. The truck couldn't get around the car and hit the pavement edge, lost control and spilled most of the load.

At the end of the building project, there were about 40 sheets left. A local fellow needed some and they sold them to him for $2 a sheet.

Pastor Sam: "Ever since we started building this church, whenever we needed someone to do a job, there's always someone there to do it."

The most important thing for him during the building of the church was that he didn't want any one or anyone's feelings to get hurt. He said, "We are all brothers in Christ and are Christians. It won't do any good to get a church built and then not get along."

He and the guys who worked on the church building became closer than ever. Even conflicts didn't cause riffs. Merle Forss had a strong work ethic. Another worker talked a lot and didn't work much. Merle was digging a trench on the north wall. The worker came over and said he thought it was better to do it (his) way. Merle never said a word, but handed him the shovel and went and had a cup of coffee.

Bud Kitterman was in charge of the construction. There were a few building mistakes made and Merle named them... "Bud's mistake #1," "Bud's mistake #2," etc. One mistake in the paneling on the sanctuary ceiling Merle pointed out as "Bud's Mistake," but with good humor. A few people still know where it is.

Currently, between 60-70 people attend Sand Lake Alliance church in the summer with some Sundays over 100. Attendance is much lower in the winter after the 'snow birds' leave. Attendance is usually in the 30's. Church is only cancelled if there is a blizzard or other hazardous weather. Sam said, "We just don't want elderly faithful trying to get to church and sliding off the road."

Pastor Sam asked visitors to put a pin on the United States map in the back of the fellowship hall showing where they come from. Pins are all over the country.

Pastor Sam asked visitors to put a pin on the United States map in the back of the fellowship hall showing where they come from. Pins are all over the country.

Asked to what extend the CMA organization was involved in getting the new church started, Pastor Sam replied the CMA Headquarters agreed to provide a salary for the pastor for two years, decreasing it every six months by 25 percent as the church was more able to support itself. By the end of the two years, the congregation provided the pastor's salary. Pastor Sam added that he also drove school bus to help supplement his salary.

Though Pastor Sam never mentioned it, it's well known that until 4 to 5 years ago, many months in the winter Sam went without his salary so the church could pay the bills. When the summer people came back and the offering was up, he was paid back.

Before starting Sand Lake Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, while he was Pastoring Dora Lake Alliance he had gone to a conference. Some older pastors there suggested younger pastors purchase their own property as an investment for their future. Even though many churches provided a parsonage, upon retirement a pastor could be on the street with only a suitcase and no where to go.

Sam feels the Minnesota pioneer spirit, the do-it-yourself stuff is still here. People help and they just do it. Christian Missionary Alliance churches always had that spirit with their Indian missions and churches in logging communities.

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At the time, Sam and Wendy were caring for her sister's two children as well as their own two. In Grand Rapids to get a muffler, they stopped at Arrowhead Properties and noticed an ad for 40 acres for sale on Big Sand Lake. Stanley King owned 40 acres on the south side of the lake and 40 acres on Cedar Lake.

Pastor Sam and a logger friend looked at the Cedar Lake property and saw that at least one-third of the property was on high ground. He offered $200 an acre. King's health was bad and he wanted to sell. He asked Sam for $8,000 with $2,000 down. Sam and Wendy made payments, but before the last few payments received a letter from King stating since they made all their payments on time, they should consider the next payment their final one.

Wendy was teaching, and they had the four children in school. Since they owned the property they built a road and put in a mobile home. Eight weeks later, they were still waiting for electricity and septic, but they hauled water, caught bass and had a fun summer. They played Scrabble by candle light, took baths and washed their hair in the lake. It was one of the best experiences the family ever had.

Sam feels the Minnesota pioneer spirit, the do-it-yourself stuff is still here. People help and they just do it. Christian Missionary Alliance churches always had that spirit with their Indian missions and churches in logging communities. Sam recounted, "The first CMA pastor in Dora Lake came out from Deer River on the Blood, Gut and Liver Line and walked into Dora Lake in the 1920's and started that

church. We're only about the fourth generation here."

Sam said, "The Lord pretty much still leads. Wendy has a retirement plan, and we're working to make sure the church will continue even after we're gone. We have a good board, responsible elders who can lead the church and hire a pastor. We don't plan on leaving, but it's good to have plans in place. The CMA will help provide pastors, if needed." (In 2010, Pastor Sam retired and Pastor Zach Ender is now pastoring the church.)

Alliance guidelines are used for sermons and membership. Sam went to an Alliance college. Alliance churches support missions. Pastor Sam believes we should go into the world and share our faith in God with people who never heard of Jesus Christ. The CMA was one of the earliest churches to go into the mission field. The Alliance was founded by a former Presbyterian minister but now is more inter-denominational. "Alliance" itself means conglomeration of denominations. Membership is required for church organizations.

Sam feels the diversity is a strength. He said, "I will not pastor a church that is judgmental and contentious and does not show the love of Christ. If we show God's love I will continue as long as the Lord leads."

The Alliance church is well suited for a low population area. There aren't enough people to have individual denominations.

Before coming to Sand Lake, Sam mentioned he had the keys to churches of five or six different denominations. He was teaching Release Time Ministry including Alliance, Methodist, Lutheran, Episcopalian and Baptist. He said, "It was thrilling to be able to work together. It was learning for them and learning for me."

Norma's famous cookies ... a constant part of any activity.

Sam also pastored the Alliance church in Bena. It was part Native American and part white and the church was a middle ground.

Sam feels diversity is the predominant characteristic of the congregation. Other areas of diversity - people are here by choice to fish, camp, hike, and hunt. Many come in the summer and they like being here. Their contributions to the church are generous. In our congregation, people genuinely like each other and love doing things together. The church welcomes all. Sam says he has even introduced people to their own neighbors.

At a Thanksgiving service, Vi Carlson said she was thankful for the church. "Before the church came here," she said, "neighbors didn't talk. Now with the church, we all visit and see one another." Often Pastor Sam has to wait for people to leave after church before he locks up. "We pray for one another and care for one another," he added. "Out of our prayers comes a concern to do something."

At Easter and Christmas, the congregation takes over the service. Pastor Sam shows up on those Sunday mornings and doesn't know what is going to happen. Elaine Rasmussen says this shows Sam's faith in his congregation. Everyone participates. Children take the offering on Sundays. Their only instruction is "just don't miss anyone!" Of course, every member of the congregation helps. The offering plate only spilled once, and everyone helped pick it up.

Members like Norma Forss contribute in other ways as well. For years now, she has been providing cookies to go with the coffee and tea before and after the service.

Though he's been the only pastor here, he says it's NOT his church. It's God's. He's just here to serve Him.

Sam wasn't sure about starting a church. He took a walk and prayed about it and finally said, "Lord, you take care of the details and I'll follow. Everything came together – the Community Center, land, building – it's just happened."

"Really good people do things here and don't say anything. It's amazing how members of the congregation take things on and get things done," he added.

There is a definite core set by faith and values. But the bottom line is this church is Christ-centered. The church shows the Lord changes lives for the better.

Pastor Sam concluded that he appreciates the area – the nature, beauty, sunrise, woods, and lake. He loves the activities and life here. He mentioned a pair of eagles this summer and a deer that came in to the feeder. All this and much more right outside the house. It is away from the rat race.

END MUNTEAN

John **Perkins**

By Bernie Troje

Perhaps more than a few summer people (Bea Eggar used to say, “Some are; some aren’t.”) have childhood memories of Sand Lake. One is John Perkins who first visited Sand Lake in 1952 and today call Sand Lake home.

What’s kept him coming back to his family’s property on the south shore? The answer is the subject of most of the songs he writes and performs. In fact, the lyrics celebrate many of the reasons most residents find are their own. His audiences know first hand what John sings about.

Whether it’s singing to the trees and the lake from his back porch, on stage at The Edge of the Wilderness Art Center, or at our Community Center... his songs celebrate a life-long narrative that actually began before he was even born. The following is the story behind the songs … “the rest of the story.”

In the 1920s, two brothers John & Will Van Deursen bought 80 acres on Sand Lake including lakefront from the western part of the long sand beach at the southeast end of the lake, around the “point”, and down the western side of the “boot” or “channel”.

Soon after the purchase, Will Van Deursen dropped out of the partnership. and John’s great uncle, John Harms entered the picture. Harms was a banker and had the money and a love the fishing, so he bought the available undivided half interest thus becoming a partner with John Van Deursen.

At the time, the roads to the parcel were primitive. The passable road ended where Lakewood and Peaceful Valley resorts are now. Rainbow Road and Mini-Car-Car Lake Road were logging trails. To solve the problem of getting to the property, Harms bought a small, additional piece of property in Lakewood Bay next to where Lloyd Westermann lives. This little wedge had 50 feet of lake frontage on which he put a boathouse. He’d drive up from Chicago, park his car at the end of the road, get in his boat and motor out to the “point”. Longtime resident and friend, Ludwig Hataja, trenched an access from the Lake into a boathouse built on the channel just south of the “point’. Harms simply motored his big old wooden boat into the boathouse, and walked up the bluff to his tarpaper sided cabin. Perkins has his dock in the same spot today. This was the property’s access for years until Harms turned a “deer path” into a drivable road and eventually in the 1950s had the power company bring electricity to the cabin.

At about the same time the tarpaper cabin was given a makeover. The exterior was sided with cedar shingles. Inside a hardwood floor was laid and dry wall was put up. The water came from a sand point well.

Then along came John Perkins. He was born in 1946. It was his maternal grandparents who were coming up to his uncle’s cabin. His grandfather’s sister had married John Harms. The Rieger family with young John Perkins stayed at Sand Lake Lodge during their visits. The cabin was too small to ac-

commodate them. They'd stay two weeks starting in 1952.

John loved the lake and the woods; and he liked that old primitive cabin, and the long, windy road that seemed "to go on forever." To this day, he recognizes the trees along the road his grandfather pointed out to him. He absorbed all this, and his music is imbued with the spirit of boyhood wonderment.

All the Rieger's out at the cabin on the point...

John's namesake uncle "Johnny", grandmother Ethel, grandfather Carlyle, mother Marjorie, and aunt Marion

When he was in college, John came up here with college friends. When he got married, he came up for a "magical honeymoon." He has a son, and they'd come up here, and camp and fish 12 hours a day. His son would bring his toys and play with them in the front of the boat. The 12 years he missed coming up to Sand Lake he went to the BWCA. After his divorce, he started coming up here again with Sandy, to shom he is now happily married.

As the owners passed on, the undivided interests were eventually owned by Perkins and John Van Deursen Harms' son, Doug. In the 1990s, it was finally divided after some contentious mediation. Both wanted the same point. John ended up with the road, Doug the cabins on the point.

After 46 years of vacationing at Sand Lake, John was ready to ILIVE at the Lake. At first John lived in a trailer, but he got a building permit in 1998. He built a garage and lived in it before he built his house. John loves to sit outside and play for the trees and Darby, his dog and any fishermen who happen to be there on the lake in front of his cabin.

George Svatos... a longtime resident down in Lakewood Bay once drove his tractor to one of John's house concerts because he couldn't get his car started.

He began playing his guitar in the 60s. He played songs by the Kingston Trio and Joan Baez, sometimes in coffee shops. That was "hot stuff" in college. When most others moved on and gave up music, John kept it up. It was "an ego thing;" he needs to be a performer. In his advertising job, he always loved making presentations, liked being in front of people, and still likes to be one of the loudest voices in any gathering. Mostly, however, he played for friends and played other composers' songs.

When he met Sandy, his second wife... "it was magic." They'd sit on the shore and watch the northern lights. Finding love again and experiencing nature, he started writing his own songs in 1999. "Cabin in the Woods" was his first. Wedged between two other passengers, he wrote it flying back toChicago from a New York business trip. He wrote the whole song word-for-word in the middle seat of an airplane and has never changed it. He says, "the song had probably been brewing in his head since he was 16 years old and strummed his fist chord."

He was at the cabin after his divorce from his first wife, and it had been an emotional time. Just being there became an epiphany – he told himself, "you can be fixed."

Many performers are moody. John has written many of his songs during his happy times, but some beautiful songs, have come from the sad times. They're not happy but poignant, very real. They come from a very deep place inside him. He asks Sandy, "Should I really do these?" She says, "You should do them – in certain places, not everywhere – certainly not at Bud and Gin Kitterman's 60th Anniversary." He says these songs are part of him. He points out that John Denver wrote songs like this too. Music should express a person's whole life, his entire self.

John has lived in populated suburbs with "worrisomely few friends." He has counted on Sandy to be the sociable one but was often here by himself. A happy part of John's life is the community he has found up here. He said he has more friends up here than he's had in his entire life. John has wacky friends and friends who are regular Lake Woebegone Lutherans. Some are even Republicans. They have their own views but still get along. They don't argue with each other about divisive, touchy issues.

At the time of the interview, John was working on a song: "I've got to find new dreams, I've got

After 46 years of vacationing at Sand Lake, John was ready to LIVE at the Lake. At first John lived in a trailer

to find new things to do, come with me. Come on with me, baby, I've got places to go." He's talking about "going out the window, down the wall, … there's new dreams to [find] out there." He wants to build an acoustic music venue here in the woods and continue his music. He's written a children's book, and has a greeting card company ready to start called "Sticks and Stones." He will take photos of sticks and stones from the woods and write captions as though those natural objects could talk.

Willy Frederick is one of John's friends. He's a former air traffic controller, a maple syrup man, who hunts and fishes. Willy's taken John under his wing, introduced him around, and opened up more friendships for John.

Another friend, Charlie Ramos, was a jeweler for 20 years in Deer River, was an Army brat, is a Latino, left wing, a friend of the liberal community in Grand Rapids. Charlie's daughter's a wardrobe artist for a rock band. (Charlie has since moved to Florida.)

Believe it or not... Willy and Charlie always got along.

Great uncle John's friend Ludwig's son Richard asked Perkins for permission to hunt on his property. John said, "Sure... as long as I get some venison." The Hataja family is part of the original Sand Lake community who helped build homes and resorts around the lake. Hataja's are, John said, an important thread that runs through the fabric of our community.

These connecting threads aren't as apparent in a big city. Here relationships happen with ease for John. When he needs help with something, he knows someone who can help him. He says we take care of each other.

John's a member of the property owners association (SLPOA). Because of his graphic arts background, he does their newsletter. He's also designed a website to promote his music. When he volunteered to deliver the fishing regulation cards for the association, he got to meet all the resort owners on Sand Lake.

John believes there are places in the universe where something is missing & "you get plugged in."

He does admit it would be difficult for him to have finished out his advertising career and finally retired here if there hadn't been internet access to the property. Now, glory be, fiber optic cable comes right to his house. He says it's "unbelievable" that there is fiber optic here in the wilderness. (At this writing it's one of the few, if not the only, rural communities to have fiber optic.)

It's also important to John that he's a steward of his land. It's part of the Chippewa National Forest and the Leech Lake Reservation. He has experienced this area from a young boy through to adulthood, as the property has been passed on to him from his extended family. His song "Spirits In The Wind" captures some of the magic of all those who have walked the woods on the west bank of the channel.

He's found his niche in these parts with his music. Marcie Lindgren is his contact at The Edge of the Wilderness where he has performed. He's sung in the talent search at the Reif Center and for audiences at his home and at all kinds of community groups and events. With his wife playing spoons, he even played at the "Jug Band Boogie" contest held every year at Deer Lake Charlies east of Effie.

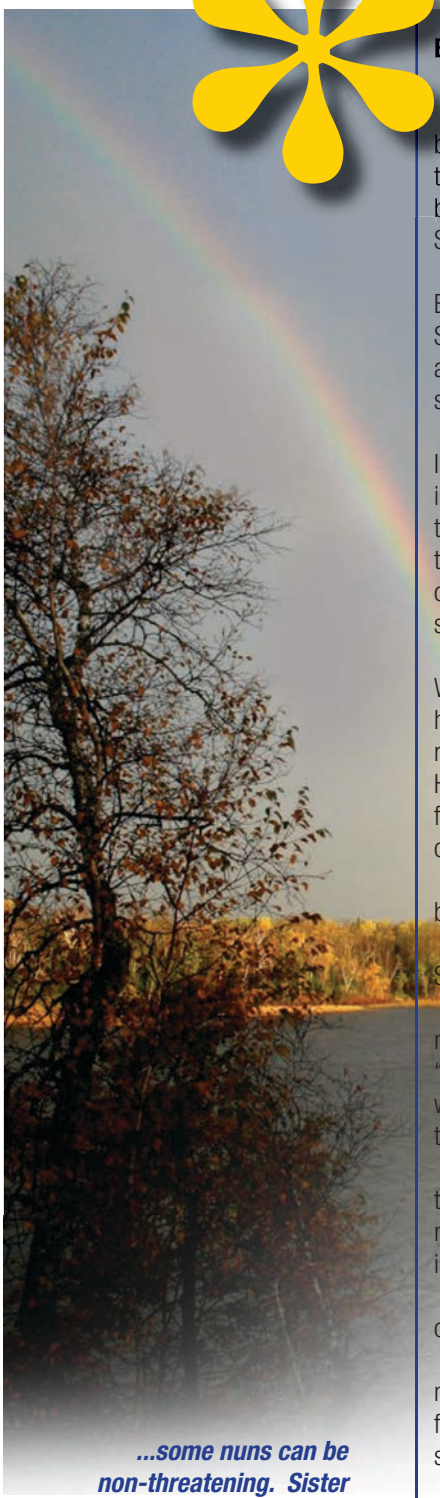
House concert with a lot of Sand Lake neighbors.

He played for the June, 2011, potluck and meeting of the Evergreen Friendship Club. The songs he sang, accompanied by Jerry Hagen, a friend of Marie Lindgren, are about the place we all love. One couldn't say anything bad about his voice, his guitar playing, and certainly the lyrics to his songs without understating them. We wonder why he doesn't have an agent who would get him gigs on the likes of Prairie Home Companion. He's at least as good as anything we've heard in his genre.

His talent helps us all really see again our lake, our woods, our community. His songs vividly remind us what drew us here and why we stay or keep coming back. John needs an audience; we appreciate his artistry. In fact, his performances up here in northern Itasca County, may be the perfect combination of an artist and an audience. Interestingly, he told us his winter community in North Carolina enjoys his music [almost] as much as we do.

END PERKINS

Sister Ethel **Radhke**



...some nuns can be non-threatening. Sister Ethel is one of those. This made it possible for her to know many Native Americans and their culture.

By Bernie Troje

I interviewed Sister Ethel Radhke one Friday morning as we ate breakfast at the Crowbar. She brought boxes of photos to share, but instead we had a spontaneous two hour conversation without the props. It touched upon one obvious and important part of this area – the divide, not connection, between the Native Americans and the rest of us. Yet, as I suspected, I think the interview shows that Sister Ethel became a bridge between the two.

At least one reason this happened is that, first of all, some nuns can be non-threatening. Sister Ethel is one of those. This made it possible for her to know many Native Americans and their culture. She respected them and appreciated their ways. Another reason is that Sister had other connections and was able to acquire some titles as well. These made it possible for her to assist many people as she became aware of their needs.

Her intention, of course, was never to proselytize for the church or on behalf of the white culture. In fact, she admires how Indian spirituality satisfies their needs and how their way of life keeps them in touch with their life source. It saddened Sister to find an old issue of 'The Minnesota Quarterly' of the Minnesota Historical Society describe the White Earth Benedictines Christianizing the Indians in the early 1900's. Sister Ethel feels the Native Americans here sense many of us do not understand or respect their way of life. If this is true, there probably are many reasons for it, and we remain two separate communities in most ways.

Sister Ethel's background perhaps explains her sensitivity to this issue. She grew up in Two Rivers, Wisconsin. It's thirty miles southeast of Green Bay. Literally, two rivers come together and form a harbor on Lake Michigan. The safety of the harbor spawned commercial and trophy fishing. Sister remembers the piers being built and the large boats docked by them.

Her father was a Lutheran; her mother a French Catholic. They lived in a large house, and teachers from her school rented rooms on their second floor. Each day her mother prepared lunch for a dozen or so teachers who'd walk over from school for a home-cooked meal.

After a full career as a teacher herself, including teaching biology at St. Scholastica, Sister Ethel began spending her "retirement" years in Squaw Lake as a pastoral assistant.

Those years say a lot about what community is – people coming together and making connections. Sister Ethel has become a part of many of our lives, and the enrichment has flowed both ways.

When we met for breakfast Sister had already returned to the Monastery to begin her real retirement – some thirty-five years after her first. Now she was on an extended weekend visit to her "family," staying at the Hill Motel, making plans to see Rosie, the black lab she hand to leave behind when she returned to Duluth the previous fall. She'd already been back three times, most recently for the annual St. Urho's Day Parade.

St. Urho, a mythical Finn, rid Finland of its grasshoppers to save the grapes. In previous years the Hill made a Finnish fish chowder, moyaka, for the parade. Evy and Rodney Oja, who own the flea market, once made a large green grasshopper float, the only one for the parade. Sister said she was invited to be the antique lady riding in the parade's antique car from Mertes' Garage.

Sister says the area is made up of Indian and Finndians, names that might suggest two separate communities that live among each other.

When Sister Ethel first came to the Squaw Lake area in the early 70's, her 50's, the Indian community was geographically separate. They lived on land divided into plots for ricing, for winter hunting, for fishing, and for berry picking. The families built birch bark huts at each site and moved for each season's activities.

Sister lived at Chippewa Resort on the second floor of the lodge back then. The Hewitts owned the resort. She remembers a snowy fall day when the volunteer crew came to take a pregnant Mrs. Hewitt to the hospital. As she was getting into the ambulance, the deer hunters staying at the resort yelled, "Bring back a boy." At the birth of the Hewitt's first child, a daughter, Sister Ethel became the "upstairs grandmother." She also became the children's swimming instructor as the family grew.

Sister Ethel was a city girl when she first arrived and was concerned because "there was no curbing." After living so long in a monastery, she took a while to adjust to "country life." Along with the Hewitts, the Brians and Bellingers also became her family, and she learned a lot from them. The school and the senior citizen's group also became her contacts. She remembers the students and the seniors putting on programs for each other. At the time, the senior citizens met in what was then the community center across highway 46 from the school.

In the 70's as the area began to reflect the political changes in the country, the Native Americans were recognized as a minority and were eligible for government-funded programs. Sister Ethel worked with Luella Sealy to get funds from the Community Action Program.

As Sister saw the needs among the people, she often went to the county and the reservation council. There were "brilliant men on the tribal councils. They had organizations in the tribes that funneled funds" to appropriate programs, she noted.

Sister got to know all the important contacts, such as then Sheriff Pat Medura. She became a member of the CAP board as one of two mandatory non-Indians. Because government programs under-scored the need for titles, she said, "I had to hurry and get me a title." Sister became an ombudsman for the Ojibwa in the Squaw Lake area.

With funds from another source, the Johnson-O'Malley Program, which supported extra-curriculars in the schools, she became a tutor at the elementary school. At her suggestion a Native American was put on the Johnson-O'Malley board.

Sister Ethel taught make-up summer school for elementary children and took them swimming in the afternoon. Some afternoons she'd load them into her Jeep Wagoneer and take them to nature movies and programs at the Cut Foot Sioux Visitor Information Center.

One summer she was invited by Elizabeth Boyd to use the school building for enrichment programs. The children worked with beads and birch bark and wrote items for their own newspaper 'Wannabojeau' (a legendary Indian who played tricks) printing it on ditto machines. Sister said what these students wrote was "great. Of course, they're grandparents now."

There was also money available from the Johnson-O'Malley Program to hire buses for field trips, especially to Native American Museums. Sister said, "We each had an Indian name of an animal." The children called her 'Wabekakotoo,' which means "white owl," perhaps a reference to her grey hair.

Sister said, "We each had an Indian name of an animal." The children called her 'Wabekakotoo,' which means "white owl," perhaps a reference to her grey hair.

When Sister discovered many Native Americans had no high school diploma and there was no local GED program, she started one, two nights a week, one at Inger and one at Ball Club. These students had talents, she pointed out, but working in the woods for months at a time kept them from completing high school. With a GED, the graduates could go on to the local two-year colleges in Grand Rapids and Bemidji.

Sister Ethel's connection to Native Americans has given her an appreciation for their culture and respect for spirituality. Yet she realizes we're a divided community. From the white perspective, the Native Americans are quiet and reticent. Sister believes Indians feel we don't understand their culture, so they don't feel free to share important parts of their lives. Sister sees a "rich culture [with] a beautiful, deeply spiritual concept of their world. They respect the spirits of their environment. This shows up in their prayers." But this is "private to them."

The time Sister Ethel spent in the Squaw Lake area is what gave her a respect for their "innermost" which suggests the spirituality in their daily lives. A pattern of behavior became clear to her as the Indians would visit her at home. They'd wait for her to come outside, and they wouldn't come directly to the point of their visit. She knew they had a purpose, but learned to wait for them to make it clear. When she asked an Indian friend about this, she was told, "We don't want to disturb your innermost."

Not rushing into their reason for being there for fear of disturbing someone's space, as we would call it, is quite unlike our white culture behavior, Sister observed. We've lost, or perhaps never had, that sensitivity. Sister feels discovering our space, our innermost, might help us find out we're lonely and need to reach out to others to build community, to acknowledge our need for each other.

As we were leaving the Crowbar, we ran into Steve Downs, a friend of Sister's, a member of the Kiska family which celebrated 100 years in Squaw Lake in 2006. Downs mentioned their family reunion to mark the occasion was later that summer. Sister said she was overjoyed to have yet another excuse to come back soon. Downs had suffered a heart attack a year before. Sister asked him if he was still following doctor's orders to walk every day. He assured her he was.

Sister Ethel Radhke has been our path through the woods. In her pastoral ministry here, she has given two separated parts of us an experience of each other. Is it a stretch to say the labor of her retired years has brought the spirit of each a bit closer?

END RADHKE

Bernice Anderson **Radna**

By Elinor Wright

Some things my sister taught me

She has been part of my life... all my life.

Bernice Anderson Randa of Max, Minnesota, is my sister. She has been part of my life all my life. At this writing she is 87 years old, has been a life-long Lutheran, a devoted wife for 28 years until her husband Charlie Randa died of a heart attack in 1969. She has one son Steven who lives in Washburn, Wisconsin, with his wife Rebecca and two daughters, Sarah, 23, and Molly, 19. Son Charles died in 1994. He was 51 years old. Another son, Hal, died at the age of 15 in 1962. A daughter, Susan died in 1953. She was 2 1/2 years old. Her losses have been overwhelming. Her spiritual life, her remaining family and her friends have sustained her. Her grandson Zack hovers and checks, a daily "Hi, Gram, how's it going?" blessing in macho disguise.

In all those years – 81 years, I've reckoned with her quiet and not-so-quiet counsel. Mostly, I've witnessed a principled life in action. She has proved to be a fine mentor.

My sister taught me:

That it's important to pay your bills on time.

That you can't make judgments until you hear the whole story (you never know the whole story).

That family is the most important part of living. That, and God.

That God stays put when everyone else moves on.

That sometimes a blessing is sinking into a deep chair.

That medicines are not necessarily miracles.

That pain of loss is the most painful of pains

That TV news is not news unless it's bad news.

That one cannot be happy at someone else's expense.

That "Days of Our Lives" has nothing to do with life in Max.

That patriotism used to mean feeling good about your country's decisions.

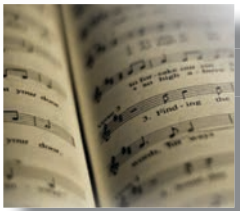
That sometimes your bed is your best friend.

That the U.S. Forest Service was a great employer.

That Swedish hymns sing to the soul.

That to live in a house by the side of the road is to be connected with life even as it rushes on to another place.

That the U.S. Forest Service attracts employees who care about nature and the nation.

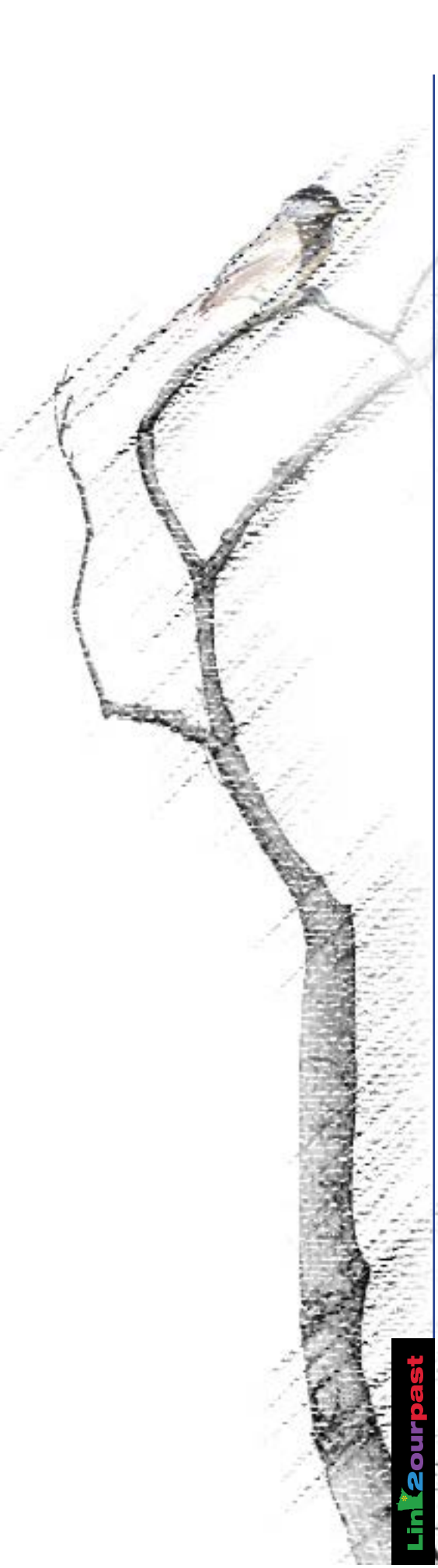


That Billy Graham speaks Christian.

That Ladies Aid aids ------- everybody!

That hymns hum long after church is over.

Link2ourpast



That having been a telephone operator connects you to people ever after.

That losing a 15 year old son leaves scars that are wedged open by his friends. They are 50. He is 15. He is always 15.

That foods signal seasons – new potatoes and peas – corn on the cob and fried parsnips – potato sausage and lutefisk.

That wars change us.

That it's getting more difficult to hear people because of modern mumbling and soft voices.

That the best thing to do with advice... pass it along to someone else (who really needs it).

That a catchy sermon is one that touches your own life, is brief, & is one that you can hear.

That waltzing in Texas to "Waltz Across Texas" is a sublime thing – especially when you win the grand prize of the ballroom competition.

That romantic movies used to be romantic without embarrassing us.

That backs arch, then ache, or visa-versa

That having a car in the garage doesn't necessarily mean you're planning a trip.

That all the magazines have recently changed over to fine print and fuzzy pictures.

That reconciling a bank balance is a testament to "alive and well and living at home."

That saying "no" can be a positive thing.

That to feed the hungry (birds, animals, people) is to nourish yourself.

That "leave me alone" does not apply to family or friends or neighbors.

That St. Urho never had a clue he would be remembered in Squaw Lake, Minnesota in 2006.

That the reason it is difficult to accept death in this north country is that everything and everyone around here wants to live - works hard to live.

That sometimes people, without knowing it, make you feel not there.

That friends are God's gift to the lonely, the sole souls.

That the Chippewa Forest is, after all, a sacred place, a legacy, pleading with us to live another way.

That an arm is ever so much stronger than a cane.

That singing around a piano is a way to love everybody.

That old songs say it best :

- "Have You Ever Been Lonely?"
- "Am I Blue?"
- "Memories"

That "A Mighty Fortress" is a fortress.

That being a chaplain for the VFW for thirty-five years makes you see white crosses with red blood pulsing through the wood and the paint.

That credit cards are sinister gangsters that deceive and captivate.

That when you're young, you admire people who are witty and well-to-do, but as older people you admire most - people who are kind and gentle.

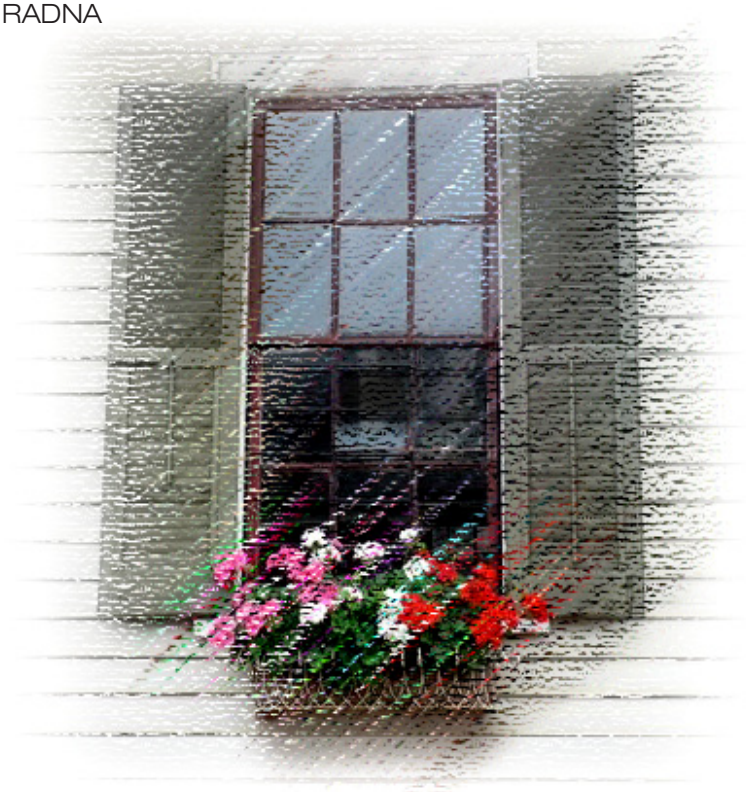
That it is civilized to write letters, to answer the telephone when it rings, to send messages of celebration, condolence, and caring to those you love.

That there is always time for the important things.

That a geranium in the window box announces all is well in the house.

That the ice candles in the cemetery on Christmas Eve are our way of remembering the gifts of these people's lives to us. They are crystals of light on the irregular snow mounds that tell us we are not alone here. Only the snow buntings know the language the dead sing when their souls are rising.

END RADNA



Link2ourpast

Marion & Linda **Roberts**

By Elinor Wright

The telephone rang one Sunday afternoon at the home of Marion and Lynda Roberts of Ocilla, Georgia. It was in the fall of 1988.

"You got yourself a cabin in northern Minnesota," the voice said.

It was not the news they expected after having made a low-ball bid two summers earlier. "We had just bought our first new truck," Marion said.

"And a brand new TV," Lynda added.

It all began in the summer of 1988. The extended family was staying at Driftwood paddling up the Bowstring River when they stopped for ice cream at Anchor Inn. From Gin and Bud Kitterman, they learned of a one-room cabin for sale on the south shore of Little Sand Lake only a couple of miles away.

Out on the lake later that week they spotted the For Sale sign and stopped. Lynda looked through the window and exclaimed, "It's all bathroom, no bedrooms!"

"It was a rash offer," Marion remembers, "- not that we didn't relate to it at once - ."

Lynda broke in, "It was beautiful – close to the water, lots of trees, basswood and Norways and cedars. But we knew our offer would never be accepted." And then the telephone call that autumn Sunday in 1988.

"It was a situation requiring quiet discussion, diplomacy, and gentle persuasion," Marion remembers.

"We were trying to convince each other," Lynda said, "but we both knew what we wanted to do. After all, everyone needs a lake home of their own, don't they?"

Marion summed it up, "We've never been sorry."

Lynda went on about the neighborhood they bought in to: "I can't get over how willing people are to help each other."

Marion said, "As long as you don't walk away, a conversation will keep going."

From their south shore vantage point, when they see the Northern Lights, they call their north shore neighbors on Sand Lake to come stand on their dock with them.

Lynda added thoughtfully, "We became part of each others dreams here. Once you live on a lake, things and people just seem to float on in, find a place, and belong right here." They haven't had too much success nurturing Georgia peanut bushes up here, but they've successfully transplanted southern hospitality.

Lynda added thoughtfully, "We became part of each others dreams here. Once you live on a lake, things and people just seem to float on in, find a place, and belong right here."

They had a delightful beginning when Judy and Butch LaTrace opened up their cabin that first spring. Lynda and Marion arrived to a clean cabin with fresh-filled hummingbird feeders and purple violets on the kitchen table.

It would be difficult to find anyone who lives in the country more than the Roberts. They know the swimming holes and the fishing spots and the hunting areas and the blueberry patches and the best places to find pliable birch bark.

They pick wild flowers on the way to the Spring Lake Store, count hawks in the fall on Hawk's Ridge in Duluth, listen to the bluegrass musicians in Blackduck, visit the black bear in Orr, hike the Lost Forty, eat Betty's Pies east of Two Harbors and attend church at Sand Lake Alliance and afterwards share a Libersky omelet at Barney's. They decorate tables, build Mexican Trains, plant memorial gardens, each flower mentioned by a verse in the Bible, and invite friends to dinner at 6:07 on certain week nights.

Lynda expressed her concerns for the area: "We don't want things to change much. We want Bird's Eye to stay Bird's Eye. We like Rice Lake to clog up with wild rice every fall. We'd hate it if the Big Island sprung a condominium."

Our families meet here to fish and picnic and explore interesting places just to keep close, to have fun, and to remember together." Whenever their kids talk about getting together, they talk about coming up to the lake.

Lynda, the philosopher says, "Everyone we know up here lives a wild life in one way or another. There's no escaping the connections that tie us together. People to people. People to creatures, too. Yesterday I photographed a fawn on the Dora Lake Road. As it lay hidden in the tall ditch grass, it looked directly at me. It trusted me. 'That's a mistake,' I thought.

"Have you thought about how the deer become wolves, skittery field mice become quiet swooping owls, tiny silver minnows turn into blue stalking herons? Up here in the north country, there's no escaping the cycle of life and death and life again."

At first their bedrooms were a pop-up tent and a van, their dining room was the picnic table on the deck. Still they'd have 15 people there at a time. Marion notes that with a sandpoint well "it took seven to eight minutes to fill up the toilet."

The Roberts did most of the work expanding their cabin themselves. It is a personal expression of what matters to them. Together they changed "cramped and dark" to "enlarged and brightened." They built cabinets, painted and sanded and oiled; they plumbed and electrified and screened.

"More than the dream cabin," Lynda reflects, "we were assembling a life we had dreamed of. We could not have imagined how much this place would mean to our families despite the distance. Our sons hunt here, and Mark their younger son worked with Jack Minehart, a neighbor across the lake, learning to build birch bark canoes. Our grandchildren swim here. Our families meet here to fish and picnic and explore interesting places just to keep close, to have fun, and to remember together." Whenever their kids talk about getting together, they talk about coming up to the lake.

Both Lynda and Marion are teachers. They teach every day, retired or not. Their closest Georgia neighbors say that when the lights are on late into the night at the Roberts' it's because they're helping a high school student catch up on his calculus assignment, or easing a –careless? –unfortunate? –reckless? kid out of a jam or helping a senior prepare for the entry exam at U.G.A. Ocilla folks nod their heads and say, "The Roberts'? They never give up on a kid." Who wouldn't want that on one's tombstone?

There's more. Marion and his state champion tennis teams; Teachers of the Year Awards (many), traveling circus trapeze performances! Lynda has become our own Betty's Pies: coconut cream, blueberry, pumpkin, plus pumpkin bars and peach cobbler. It would be easy to go on and on.

Perhaps those years as a teacher helped form Lynda's motto: "You just take everybody for what they are."

As their friends leave, you'll always hear, "See y'all next year."

Who in Sand Lake township wouldn't want neighbors like them?

1985: stayed at Sioux City Resort
1986, 1987, and 1988: stayed at Driftwood Resort
1988: Also, ice cream and extended our vacation by staying at Anchor Inn

END ROBERTS

Link2ourpast

Frank & Edith **Sollars**

By Bernie Troje

Our story starts in Coon Rapids, Minnesota. We were looking for an inexpensive vacation, so we invested in camping gear.

We started out touring the North Shore. Then we moved inland to Scenic State Park near Bigfork. We loved the area and the town. We went into the United Farmers real estate office to see what property was available, and we found a lot on Little Sand Lake and loved it right away. When our tent started to wear out and the boys were growing up we bought a pop-up camper. We stayed in the camper here for two years.

We had a female springer spaniel that would bring us baby rabbits. My sons, Dave and Chuck, would try to raise them, but it never worked. The rabbits were too young. We started putting the baby rabbits back in the woods to make sure the dog didn't get them again. She changed species. She brought us a baby porcupine. That ended her baby delivery career.
In Grand Rapids we saw a cabin built by Cohassett Lumber for $995. It had two bedroom, a very small bath, a kitchen, and a very nice porch. We stopped in and ordered it and had them hire some carpenters.

We were told it would be finished in two weeks. Two weeks became six weeks. That's when we learned all work stops during ricing season. Finally we were told it was finished, so we packed everything in our station wagon that would fit and headed up north. When we arrived, to our surprise, it had no windows or doors. We spent the night in the cramped car. We didn't get much sleep. We contacted our contractor in the morning, and his crew came out that day and finished the cabin for us.

It was three years before we got lights. Our stove was a combination gas and wood stove with a water reservoir, so we always had hot water. I miss that stove, bt was too old to get parts for.

We tried to find water but had no luck. Harvey Watts came over and witched for us. We got a little water then, but it was just surface water. Then Erick Carlson came and witched for us, but he had no luck. We decided we'd better hire someone.

To our surprise they started drilling right where Erick had witched. They found water at 70 feet – a flowing well producing 15 gallons a minute. It's still flowing to this day.
We like hiking through the woods and finding wheat nature offers. It helped the boys with their science projects. They had items different from the one of other students.

Every time we drive past the old Max store, we think of Bud Anderson and how friendly he was. He was always ready to help us,and if he didn't have what we needed he would get it by the next week.

Bud was a big help to my husband Frank when he was plumbing our place. He had never done anything like that, but Bud talked him through it.

It's hard to adequately describe the people up here. I have never lived around such friendly folks. They are the best friends ever. When someone new moves in, they are invited right into the circle.

I don't want to leave in the winter, but we have to. Of course we're ready to come back in the spring, even if there's snow on the ground. I like the snow, the colors in fall, and spring when the birds and ducks return.

Edith's specialty is peanut butter bars. She also knits. Right now she is making a double thickness peacock blue afghan for granddaughter Dannie.

Frank was in the Air Force when he and Edith met and married. He had been stationed in Florida and then transferred to St. Louis, MO where he helped write fighter pilots' handbooks

Link2ourpast

for airport runways. Most of the runways Frank worked on were in Russia.

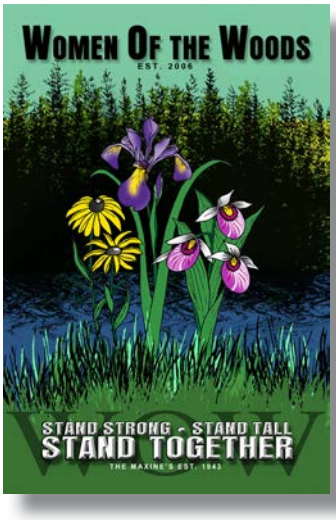
Frank started his work for Xcel Energy in the hydro-electric plant and worked mostly on generators. He also worked in steam, coal and nuclear plants.

Edith and Frank lived in Coon Rapids from 1964 – 1978 and in Blaine, MN from 1978 – 1994 and had three children, all boys, named Dave, Charles (Chuck), and Mike.

Edith managed Junior Chefs, a community education after school program for kindergarten through sixth grade teaching them skills in the kitchen two days a week. She taught them how to make yeast bread, pretzels, and cookies. They would make homemade ice cream and cookies and invite the parents to join them for a treat. Edith's nickname was "Edie Gormet." She received a Silver Plate award in appreciation for Junior Chefs.

Edith and Frank have two dogs. They went without pets for quite awhile. Then one day Frank checked the paper and suggested they get a Boston Terrier, so they got Brutus, who is now four. Later they got Sugar who is three. Edith shared that the dogs like to be covered up, even in summer. Sugar will look at Edith and whimper until Edith stops what she is doing, kisses Sugar on top of her head and covers her up.

For a number of summers Edith helped at Summer Vacation Bible School at Sand Lake Alliance Church. She says it's lots of fun watching the kids – they are so eager to learn. She especially loved watching Linda Roberts work with the kids in her class. Edith liked to help Linda with her class because her special needs grandson Rolland comes up to visit and goes to Bible School in Linda's class. Rolland loves Linda too.



Rolland has a wagon with him all the time. He loves to pull around the yard. He puts Brutus in the wagon and Edith makes Brutus lie down in the wagon so Rolland can take him for rides.

Edith loves attending W.O.W. in the summer time. She says if it weren't for W.O.W., she'd just be sitting in the cabin again. She especially loved the feather painting and bird carving. Wilbur Wright helped her use the Dremmel tool to carve her bird and it was easier going. She is going to take it to Florida and work on it down there where she and Frank have their own Dremmel tools.

Edith gave a program at W.O.W. (Women of the Woods) meeting. It consisted of helpful hints.

Elinor asked, "What's the best advice you ever got and what's the best advice you ever gave?" Edith replied, "Don't be so quick to say things that come into your head." Once her manager asked her what she felt was her biggest fault and she replied, "Foot and mouth disease." And her manager said they would work on that.

About living up here, Edith says, "This is where we belong." She refers to the area as "our beloved woods." She says, "Superficially [this part of Minnesota] may be considered unpleasant. The land is low. The mosquitos love it that way. The grass is bristly. Sometimes the roads are muddy, and the air is damp and cold.

"As we turn to leave and head back to Florida, I realize just how full of majesty, how full of life these woods are. Here I can let my curiosity about the wildlife around us run free. It is wild, completely claimed by nature.

"I am thinking now of the early sounds of spring – the croak of frogs, the call of the red winged blackbirds. Or the autumn flickers on every deserted logging road. Or the snow buntings of November who flush only when the bumper is nearly on them.

"I am blessed to be in on all these. This is where we want to be. It is more than a place of life and beauty. It is our legacy to preserve and protect this place – to leave it the way we found it."

END SOLLARS

Don & Martie **Wilson**

By Elinor Wright

It was the summer of the lonely loon on Barney's Pond. It was the summer of the blueberry-apple-rhubarb-strawberry pie. It was the summer of Bowstring vs. the Kenai.

"We are Alaskans. Part of who we are is still in Coldfoot," Martie Wilson says as she sits next to her husband Don and reminisces about the summer of decision.

"It's not over yet. Children and grandchildren in Alaska are a magnetic pull to the north. Yes, we have made a place for ourselves here on the Bowstring River. For me, life is about a journey, an arrival, a new experience. And it's about struggle, learning, and growing." Martie takes her time before going on. She looks at Don and says, "I think not inviting change is about not being sure of yourself. Sometimes I think what keeps us from moving forward toward change is wanting to know in advance that things will be perfect, that it will be the 'right' move. It's so rare when we can have that. I don't think we ever really can. So it becomes a leap of faith to invite change into our lives."

Martie and Don Wilson not only believe in change in their lives – they change the lives around them, as well. Take Looney for instance. He's the majestic creature who created a stir on Barney's Pond, Minnesota. Looney is the creation of Martie and Don Wilson, one of the blue-ribbon winners of the Sand Lake Flotilla Competition, 2006.

Looney was fashioned from pieces of wood, chicken wire, and dollar-a-yard fabric from Walmart. He was conceived, designed and brought to life on a jon-boat in the Wilson's back yard.

Of all the years loons have lived on Sand Lake, there never has been a loon as big as Looney. He floated around from bay to bay directed solely by warm summer breezes and gentle currents. He gave pleasure to people just by being there, making them smile. (Perhaps he wasn't a lonely loon after all.)

Like the loon they built so carefully, Martie and Don give a hoot. They give a hoot about family and their new home. They give a hoot about their neighbors. They give a hoot about their church, and they give a hoot about the Sand Lake Community.

"There's more pie," Martie said, "and lots more coffee." Then, "I love this place. On one level, we're all isolated. You know people, but you've never been in their houses. But, if someone's in need or hurting, there's a real support net. I feel that, especially in our church. Diversity is the key. Our church accepts and respects divergent views – agape, that's the love dimension that makes diversity work. It works for us."

"You're a different person everywhere you live," Don says reflectively. "Here – right here – we have found people who have interests similar to ours. We find it easy to help out and to say 'yes, I can do that'." I was a Jehovah's Witness, and I witness to people in my daily life. Whatever Martie and I do, God has a hand in it."

A retired, soft-spoken, Alaskan State Trooper/Fish and Wildlife Officer, Don experienced life as an aviator-adventurer. His everydays were expeditions and explorations and survival journeys. He protected peoples' lives. His business was law and order and protecting the resources. Don saved people and animals, and he saved people from animals. He flew hospital runs and mercy missions. He rescued people in distress, and he survived in a downed plane in a snowstorm for two days. Don dealt with squatters and poachers and those who just wanted "to start all over again."

Don's area of Alaska covered all of the Brooks Range in northern Alaska. "We, the State Troopers,

A retired, soft-spoken, Alaskan State Trooper/Fish and Wildlife Officer, Don experienced life as an aviator-adventurer. His everydays were expeditions and explorations and survival journeys. He protected peoples' lives.

were the first ones people looked for and the last ones they wanted to see." Don settled back in his chair. "There were never enough of us," he said. "We were responsible for a large area that required handling duties from First Responder to coroner and everything in between. On the road, in the air, every kind of weather and terrain – you realize there are still frontiers close by. I miss that in my life."

Don met Martie in Coldfoot in 1988. "God had a hand in all of it," Don says again.

Martie raised a family in the wilderness. She worked as a waitress, a school secretary and a hostess to tour groups visiting Coldfoot, Alaska, on their way to Prudhoe Bay.

Maybe it was in Coldfoot that she learned to make the blueberry-apple-rhubarb-strawberry pie. Maybe it was in Coldfoot she learned to quilt. Maybe it was in Coldfoot she learned about computers and photography – and truck drivers. (There were 200 trucks a day that passed through the Coldfoot Truck Stop where she worked.) But maybe, and much more likely, Martie learns wherever she goes, whatever she does, and with whomever she finds herself.

All these "Yes, I can do that's" have added up to Treasurer of the Township, Editor of the Sand Lake Property Association Newsletter, church secretary and bulletin writer. She teaches quilting and helps neighbors with balky computers – smiling the whole time.

Don moved back in his chair. The interview was over. He summed up, "You concern yourself with what is past and wonder what is ahead, but then you clear your mind and recognize that the present is where life really is. Some of us never find our place. Others find their place wherever they go. Think of it this way. You're always in the right place."

Too often, we focus on the distance and miss the big bird (a loon?) right here on our path.

END WILSON