



Spring 2010

[www.saturdaypond.org](http://www.saturdaypond.org)

Issue # 20

**Preserve**

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40 Ridgewood Terrace  
Otisfield Maine 04270  
[www.saturdaypond.org](http://www.saturdaypond.org)

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**JOIN US**

**July 17, 2010**, 9:00 a.m. for our annual SPWA meeting at Pond View Beach or if rain at the Otisfield Free Baptist Church.

**President's Message**

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Hope this newsletter finds you well and thriving as we pick up the economic pieces of last year. It seemed as if Spring came early this year with the earliest ice out date since we started recording - March 25th! Although I haven't personally seen the loons yet this year, others have seen a pair and heard their calls echoing over the lake. It won't be long until we'll be full-fledged into summer activities. Although it's hard to imagine as I write this message today among the sweet smell of lilacs and predictions of snow showers!

One of the agenda items at our Fall SPWA Board of Trustees' meeting, was to think about articles for our Spring newsletter. Someone suggested I write about my summers at Great Oaks Camp (GOC). Given that a piece of Otisfield's history is in the process of disappearing, I thought this might be a good time to share some of my memories with you.

For those of you who don't know, Great Oaks Camp was located off of Rayville Road (which wasn't called Rayville Road at the time) on the east side of the pond. I lived on the second floor of the "main house" at the camp for key summers of my life - from the time I was eleven until I was twenty with a year or two missed during a stint at another summer camp and waitressing during my college years. I shared many meals with hundreds of campers and counselors in that unique knotty pine dining room with its wagon wheel lantern lights and incredible stone fireplace. Although the camp was closed in 1985, many campers and counselors are still in touch with the Dryzga family and stop by from time to time to pay a visit to their dear old GOC. With our cabins abutting the property, I get to re-connect with these old friends, as well.

Great Oaks Camp was established in 1924 by Joseph and Gert Becker. Joe bought the property for \$6000. Legend has it that Joe wrote a check to purchase the camp property for one more dollar than he had. Previously a boarding house, the original lodge was called the Lakeview. At that time, you could see down to the lake from the top of the hill.

Joe Becker was the Assistant Headmaster of Collegiate School which is located in New York City. Established in 1628, Collegiate is the oldest private boys' school in the country. Joe's daughter, Jean, married Dick Dryzga who was the head of the Upper School and Director of Admissions at St. David's School, also located in Manhattan. Dick joined the camp staff in 1949. Many of the GOC campers and counselors came either from Collegiate School or from St. David's.

Great Oaks was a small boys' camp - there was one counselor for every four campers. The boys participated in many activities every day - swimming, water skiing, canoeing, sailing, riflery, tennis, archery, baseball, arts and crafts and horseback riding. Many campers went on to become counselor aides (CA's) and in turn, counselors. Each year, counselors also came to the camp from abroad - Britain, Holland, Denmark and Germany to name a few of the countries. As a result, the campers learned about and experienced many diverse cultures.

There were three sections of cabins or tents 'down the hill', each with a "Granny" - a cabin where the toilets were located and cold running water in long trough sinks. There were no showers - baths happened in the lake on Saturdays. The very rustic nature of the camp and

the loyalty of its campers returning year after year always amazed me. Most of the boys came from very affluent New York families (family names like Robards and Kilgallen were not unusual), so to live in an open-air cabin or tent without electricity and running water for an entire 8-week period was quite incredible. Of course, there were always a few counselors who will remain unnamed (although the most notorious of them's initials are BB), who managed to sneak hot showers in the main house or the infirmary. This was accomplished by befriending the cooks or the nurse at the beginning of each camp season.

If Great Oaks was a boys' camp, you might ask how then did I end up spending my summers at Great Oaks? As the Athletic Director at Collegiate School, my dad worked at the camp as the Program Director and my mom helped out in the office and tutored. I started making the trek to GOC when I was eleven and my sister was seven. Being younger, my sister was able to participate in camp activities until she reached her pre-teenage years, and then later worked in the kitchen.

My "job" was to help run errands every day with the directors' daughters, Lynn and Karen. Our errands consisted of shopping for medical supplies, picking up hardware items or going grocery shopping to pick up a few needed things that hadn't been delivered. During my early teen years, it was quite exciting for me to drive into town with my now, very dear friend, Karen. We'd leave after 8:00 AM breakfast to get back by 1:00 lunch time so that we could get down to the "ladies dock". Given that GOC was a boys' camp, there was a separate main boys' dock and the "ladies dock" - which is the current site of the Dryzga's dock on the lake. Once on the dock, we had three glorious hours on the lake sometime stretching it one more half hour before heading back up the hill for 6:00 supper.

Mealtimes were always memorable. Before each meal, a camper count was done in the dining room. I always listened very carefully for the voice of my latest heart throb shouting out his number. Dick and Jean were on top of everything in that dining hall and at the camp. In hindsight, having the responsibility of overseeing the health and safety of about 110 campers, approximately 40 counselors and a few miscellaneous personnel for eight weeks, today boggles my mind.

Camp food was incredible! Jean developed the daily menus that, during my time, were prepared by Freemy (Gladys Freeman - Betty Goss' mom) and Lonny (who was the cook at Collegiate School). Wednesday and Saturday nights were the cooks' night off when we roasted hot dogs over open fires - no match for our every day amazing fare. Among my favorites homemade doughnuts and turkey dinners every Sunday with Freemy's famous coleslaw covered with her special butter-sugar dressing. Each boy's birthday was celebrated with a birthday cake. Another of my "jobs" was to help decorate the 160 pieces of cake that were served to celebrate the event. The Dryzga girls, the nurse and I always had lots of fun writing different sayings on each of those pieces of cake and seeing which of the campers or counselors got which saying! Each summer, despite our best attempts to watch what we ate, we all came home five-ten pounds heavier from all the wonderful home-cooked meals.

Although the boys went on camping trips to Mt. Washington, canoeing trips to Crooked River and the annual trek to OOB, my fondest memories were back home at camp. They were of simple things like walking to the East Otisfield Baptist Church on Sundays for church (the Catholic boys went in the camp truck to the Catholic church in Oxford), Saturday night campfires (you can still see the ring at the Jones' previous home), hanging out in the Recreation Hall (the barn) watching movies on rainy days or walking to the lean-to (which still stands on the Great Oaks shores). Whether in the dining room with one of the counselors on the piano or at a Saturday night campfire - we always sang the camp song with gusto - "We're the GOC boys, that's who we are, And to our dear camp, we will all be true, There is no doubt about it, We go off a hiking through the woods of Maine. There's no camp like our camp for good, clean fun." Of course, the girls devised their own version of that song - but I'll never tell!

One of my most special memories was of banquet night - the celebration of the end of another camp season. The boys went out into the woods to cut pine boughs which were hauled into the dining room and placed on its pine trusses. To this day, I remember the smell of pine in that dining room. Everyone dressed up in their finest. Each camper's successes at camp were celebrated and the counselors and all those who helped to make the camp season a successful one were recognized. The boys who earned a certain number of sportsmanship points over the course of the summer received an "Oak Leaf". This meant that your name, as well as the names of other boys who shared this achievement with you, was engraved on an oak leaf underneath the date of that year. These oak leaves adorned the dining room trusses. The day after the banquet everyone packed up, and then, that dreaded last day of camp! Many tears were shed as the buses pulled away driving the kids back from Otisfield and Saturday Pond to New York City.

Great Oaks Camp provided for the development of many long-lasting friendships and instilled in me my great love of Saturday Pond and Otisfield. I have been close to the Dryzga family, their extended family and friends for many years. In fact, my sister loved the area so much, at the end of one summer she informed my parents she wouldn't be returning home to New York. She's been here ever since - she lives about five minutes away from the camp. And now, my daughter and nephew get to swim in the crystal clear waters of Saturday Pond on those breezy, sunny days as I did - forty-three years ago.

Sincerely,  
Ellen Attaliades

# The Forest is the Future of Sebago and Surrounding Lakes

By Paul Thomas Hunt

Ask any Mainer the reasons he or she chooses to live here and "I love the woods" is likely to be near the top of the list. We value the Maine woods to hike, hunt, ski, or ride a snowmobile. Or maybe it's just comforting to know they are there instead of high rise buildings and asphalt. We look forward to the explosion of foliage in the fall. And we also know that those same woods provide jobs for many Mainers. These are clean jobs utilizing a renewable resource for which our state has always been known. The Pine Tree State is so named for a good reason. The Maine woods are part of our legacy and our identity.

Here is another good reason to love the Maine woods: clean water. Every year more than 40 inches of water rains down on our state. Of that water, about half runs off to streams or rivers, lakes and ponds, and eventually to the ocean. Another 30 percent or so evaporates during the journey to the sea. The remaining 20 percent soaks into the ground, replenishing our groundwater aquifers. Eventually, even that groundwater flows out of the ground into rivers and lakes.

So what does this have to do with forests? Just about everything.

The forests act as a great sponge, slowing and soaking up the water as it travels over the land, ensuring that as much of that water as possible reaches the groundwater. Even the water that doesn't soak into the ground is cleaned as it travels to the nearest stream or lake. Nature provided forests for this water treatment purpose and when we convert forests to other uses, such as residential housing, we diminish the land's ability to soak up and clean the water.

So it is good news that Maine is the most forested state in the country. In fact, according to the US Forest Service, we have more forest in Maine now than we did in 1900, when Maine hosted many, many more small farms than it does today. So even as our population doubled in the past century, the number of acres of forest per Maine resident stayed about the same (35 acres per person). The way life should be.

So what about the future? Is there reason for concern? According to a recent report entitled "Forests, Water and People," the answer is yes. This study is the work of the US Forest Service and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. And it has both good news and bad news for us. The watershed that surrounds Sebago Lake and provides water to Sebago Lake and the Presumpscot River, exists in a precarious state (Note: about half of the town of Otisfield is in this watershed). Here's why: the watershed is able to produce very clean water today because it is mostly forested. And this is important because many of us (one in six Maine residents) rely on Sebago Lake for drinking water. But, and here's the big but, almost all of that forest which is doing such a good job cleaning our water is privately owned and could be converted to other non-forest uses if the owner chooses. And for the very reasons we all love Maine, other people from other places continue to show interest in moving here. So there is pressure to develop the woods into houses, stores, roads and other uses. If this happens to a great extent, it will show up in the quality of water in Sebago Lake as well as other lakes in the watershed and the rivers and streams that feed these lakes. Here is a link to the entire report: <http://www.na.fs.fed.us/pubs/detail.cfm?id=5257>

So what should we Mainers do? Well, first, let's just sum up what the US Forest Service report means: the Maine woods are not just enjoyable and beautiful, they are a critical resource that every day are providing an ecological benefit or "service" to all of us directly or indirectly. We all win if our woods stay wooded and we will all pay an enormous price if they don't. Should Maine adopt laws, regulations, policies and/or procedures which will make it more likely that the land stays wooded? That would seem to be in all our best interest. But just how to do so is a complicated question that should be answered by citizens and local and state policy makers. The state should be considering how best to preserve our forest legacy. And each town should do so as well.

For now, we think it's important to amplify the message that "The Forest is the Future."

Paul Thomas Hunt

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Maintaining the working forest in the Sebago Lake watershed is a key to long-term water quality protection.

## IMPORTANT DATES

**May 15, May 21 & June 12 Maine Volunteer Lake Monitors** will be offering water quality monitoring training for new volunteers. Visit their website for more information. [www.mainevolunteerlakemonitors.org](http://www.mainevolunteerlakemonitors.org)

**July 17, 2010**, 9:00 a.m. 2010 Annual SPWA meeting at Pond View Beach or if rain at the Otisfield Free Baptist Church.

**Oct 13, 2010** Otisfield Lake Association Meeting 7:00 p.m. Otisfield Town Office. Speaker will be Jackey Bailey who is managing and in charge of operations pertaining to the recent Federal Grant received to control Variable Milfoil in our area.



**Saturday Pond Watershed Association**  
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☆ **Many Thanks To Our Contributors** ☆

Articles from: Ellen Attaliades & Paul T.Hunt, Co-Editors: J. Sirois & S. Klenzak, Publisher: Nancy Jackson, Labels: Abby Marble

**JOIN SPWA for 2010**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
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 Email (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Membership \$15.00

I prefer to read the newsletter:       via the web                       via regular mail

Make check payable to: **Saturday Pond Watershed Association** and mail to:

**SPWA**  
**Jacinthe Sirois Treasurer**  
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