

## 80 Years of Memories at Rush Lake by Edna Lee Dock

My family, which consisted of my parents, Ray and Mary Lee, and my sisters, Doris and Arlene, and I, as well as my mother's brother's family, always had reservations at Rush Lake for the week over the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Sometimes we would stay a week and sometimes for two weeks. My earliest recollections date this to about 1927, and I would have been nine years old.

For the drive up, my mother would put blankets and pillows on the back seat for us to sit on. It seemed to take forever to get there! Sometimes on the way we would go west out of North Branch so we could go through the town of Stark. There was a creamery there and my mother liked to stop there to buy fresh milk and cream. Now that creamery has been converted into a beautiful house. From there we would take the "hogback road" to County Road 7.

We stayed at Weber's Resort. I remember there were about seven cabins, and I think that through the years we stayed at every cabin. My favorite was the double-wide cabin because it had a nice screened porch. My uncle would always bring up his accordion, and in the evenings he would play it in the porch so we were safe from the mosquitoes.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July my mother would send me up to Weber's farm to buy cream so she could make home-made ice cream. We had an old-fashioned hand-cranked ice cream maker, and I have yet to taste ice cream as good as was made with that old hand-cranker. The Webers also had a little store by the double-wide cabin, and during certain hours of the day Ed Weber would open the store so we could spend our pennies at his store, buy caps for our cap guns or sparklers. He also carried items like bread, penny candy and a few canned goods.

My sisters and I, as well as our cousins, spent a lot of time swimming in the lake while our parents were out fishing. I remember there was a nice sandy beach, but there were a lot of bloodsuckers in the lake. If any of us got a bloodsucker on us, we would sprinkle salt on them so they would

release themselves from our skin.

My dad had a little 5-horse motor, and we would take the boat over to what we called the "little lake." There was a shallow channel that took you from the big lake to the little lake, and you had to push yourself through the channel with your oars. There were only two cabins on the little lake at that time.

From what I can remember, there were also twin barns on the northwest side of the lake. My dad used to say, "If you want to catch fish, go over by the twin barns." Everyone on the lake knew this was the best spot to catch walleyes.

When I got older, I would borrow my uncle Frank's tent and we girls would go tenting on Rush Lake at Mattson's Resort. Archie Mattson was a little older than we were, and we were happy to have him as a friend. If we needed anything in town, he was always happy to take us there. I remember right across from Mattson's was an island that was called "Wilson's Island." There was also a dance hall on the north side of the lake, and I remember seeing Whoopie John there as well as other acts. Archie would always drive us there and bring us back to the resort after the dance hall closed.

At that time, I was working at the Northern Pacific Railroad and I would get free passes. On Friday nights I would take the train up to the Rush City depot, and my dad would pick me up. I would stay with my folks over the weekend and ride home with them on Sunday night. My family and I continued going up to Rush Lake through the years, and eventually all three of us girls married.

On January 10, 1945, near the end of WW II, my husband was killed in Bastogne, Belgium. This was a very sad time for our families. My dad then decided that it was time to quit renting cabins on Rush Lake and buy some land to build a little cabin of our own where we could all go. I think he felt that by doing this, it would help us get over the grieving for our loved one. He started looking around the lake and at that time, there was no land available to buy. Dad then remembered the little lake with the two cabins on it. He went to the Rush Point store and asked the owner, Mr.

Boswell, if he knew who owned the land. Mr. Boswell told him the land belonged to Elmer and Luella Fredin.

Dad paid a visit to the Fredins, and asked if they would be willing to sell him some land. After awhile, they decided they would sell Dad an acre of land between the two cabins. Mr. Fredin told us that the land he was selling my dad had been used for the annual Rush Point Church picnic. The price was \$500, and I put in \$250 toward the price.

In order to get to the property, we had to drive through the Fredin's pasture. There was just a steep, narrow dirt road leading to our property and when it rained, it was quite a chore getting to our property. Sometimes we would get stuck and had to get out of the car to push, all the while looking out for the cows and the bull! To us, this was just another adventure at Rush Lake.

After WWII things were scarce, and items such as lumber and plumbing were hard to find. Dad would go from city to city, such as Harris and Cambridge, looking for lumber and plumbing to build the cabin. Dad worked as an engineer at the Great Northern Railroad, and he didn't have a lot of time to build the cabin, so he hired Mr. Beise and other local people to build it. For quite awhile we had to rely on a kerosene stove and kerosene lamps, as there was no electricity. When it got dark, we went to bed! We also had an oak icebox, and whenever we came up to the cabin, my dad would go and buy a block of ice from the ice barn. This barn was on the shore of the big lake, and contained huge blocks of ice which were kept covered with sawdust so they wouldn't melt.

Now and then, we'd have a surprise visit from the cows that were pastured there. They would walk from the pasture into the lake and then around our fence and up into our yard. We'd have quite a time running around shooing the cows back up into the pasture again.

Across the lake from our cabin there is a fairly large area of land which we always called "the island." It isn't a real island, as there is a stretch of narrow land which leads to it and which separates our lake from

the big lake. Back then there were rumors that a man once had a house on the island and had murdered his wife in the house and buried her body under the winter ice. Apparently, this man would walk from the island up to the Rush Point store, get his groceries and then walk home again. His life on the island ended in the spring, however, when his wife's body floated to the surface of the lake, and he was arrested and sent to prison. We heard this story from several local people. When we took a boat ride over to the island, we saw that the foundation of the house was still there. Another farmer in the area used to pasture his cows on the island, so for years it was kept clear of brush and weeds and was a great place to explore when the cows weren't out. Once we even brought over a metal detector to use around the old foundation, but we didn't find any buried treasure - just old tin cans. Unfortunately, the cows are long gone now and the island is completely overgrown.

When we weren't busy at the cabin, we liked going to the old Rush City dump, which was on County Road 7. I loved collecting old bottles and still have some of those we found. We also made many trips to the Rush Point store for groceries, minnows and the local news. Mr. Boswell had penny candy and grab bags for the kids, or whoever else felt like spending a dime or a quarter for a surprise gift.

In time I remarried, and my second husband, Eugene Dock, and I spent 60 more happy years at our Rush Lake cabin. These days my children, grandchildren and now a great-grandchild are enjoying the cabin by learning how to fish, swim and catch fireflies on warm summer evenings.

I am now 89 years old, and I still often think of all my happy years spent on Rush Lake.

The enclosed pictures are of May and Earl Weber taken at the Fish Lake Town Hall where there was a potluck going on. The other picture is of May and Earl, taken at our cabin. Earl would bring over his accordion and May would bring her banjo and they would play for us. This was always such a treat.

There is also a picture of the old creamery and another showing the string of fish caught in Rush Lake by my dad and my uncle, Henry Toenjes.



