

HISTORY OF PINE ACRES ON LOWER CULLEN

by Mary L. Hawkins

For 54 years, Pine Acres on Lower Cullen Lake has been our family's second home. In June, 1948 my husband, Ernest W. Keisling, and I, with three children, Bill (11), Jacqueline (7) and Teresa (6 months), purchased Pine Acres Resort from Otto and Ruby Bosch and moved in the week of July 4th. Otto managed a hotel in Illinois, while Ruby ran the resort with a lodge and seven cabins. Ruby, a.k.a. ³The Chicago Blonde², had vacationers who fished little but enjoyed the night life she provided in the lodge. Having a family, it was quite a job to honor her reservations and we soon informed the Brainerd, Nisswa and Pequot Lakes Chambers that we wanted families as our guests.

Through the years, we had nice friendly families and our children made a point of making friends and planning activities with them, whether they particularly liked them or not, because I told them their hospitality was their ³bread and butter². We took movies of everyone and then showed them when the guests returned the following year.

The children did a lot of work at the resort. Bill cleaned boats, collected and delivered wood, took the ice to the ice boxes in the cabins, dug and sold worms to the fishermen, cleaned their fish, and also served as a fishing guide. Jackie helped with the boat cleaning, cabin cleaning, ran the linens through the Mangle for pressing, took over the worm patch and fish cleaning when Bill got older, and sold groceries, pop, and ice cream in the store. As soon as Teri turned four years old, it was her job to listen for my whistle, then bring the cart to the cabin, pick up the bed linen, rugs, etc., take them to the laundry house and sort them for Monday's wash.

We were told that a colonel bought the property in the late 1920s and built a lodge and four cabins. They served meals in the lodge, which had a beautiful fireplace made from the large stones gathered on the shore of Lower Cullen Lake.

Mary Brockhouse owned the resort in the 1930s, added three more cabins and served meals. This was substantiated, by mistake, as I was scrubbing the lodge floor and accidentally snagged a corner of a panel which opened up under the stairs and there I discovered a large set of dishes, a six slice toaster, large iron frying pans and pots, and checkered tablecloths. We were also told that Indians and

traders dealt with furs at the highest point of the land called ³High Point² where there were stone tables and benches.

We had many activities at the resort, such as ³Get Acquainted Night² for the adults, movie night with popcorn and pop for children and interested adults, midnight swimming for teenagers, with sloppy joes and hot chocolate in front of the fireplace, trips for the ladies to gift shops around Gull Lake that served tea and held style shows, besides the beautiful gardens we enjoyed. My husband, Ernie, had a serious heart problem and in 1959, we hired a school teacher and family to manage the resort, but soon learned they were vacationers and not managers. Business fell off with many complaints from our regular families.

In 1960, Ernie and Teri took over the resort and, having a job in Minneapolis, I drove up each weekend to help clean and do laundry. By September, 1960, that was enough; so we asked Martin Johnson, a realtor in Nisswa, to have the lots surveyed (the cabins all face the lake) and sell them individually, rather than as a resort. He didn't believe this was a good idea, but started advertising. Torrance and Emily Bergstrom purchased the first cabin in October of 1960. Bert Beaver and his son, Tom, bought two cabins (#3 and #4) in October 1961, and Jackie and her husband, Dick, purchased small cabin #6. The remaining cabins, except for a small cabin (#5) to the east of the lodge, were all sold by 1966. Teri and I drove up weekends to join Ernie in the remodeled cabin #5. Ernie's brother, Lenny, had purchased the lodge and many of the Keislings were coming up for the July 4, 1965, weekend. While Ernie was mowing Lenny's lawn for the weekend, he suffered a heart attack. The Bergstroms, coming home from town, saw him and called 911. Lil Beaver administered first aid to him until the ambulance arrived, but he was pronounced dead on arrival at the Brainerd hospital.

In 1967, cabin #5 was sold to Les and Bernice Loomer. At that time, I purchased 60 feet of lakeshore from Lenny, between the lodge and the first cabin. After Fritz Hawkins and I married in 1968, we hired a contractor who found an old time carpenter at \$5 an hour, a plumber, and an electrician to build a two bedroom cabin on the lot. Fritz and a son-in-law, Clayton Woelfel, did the finishing work and we officially moved in 1971.

Bill and Lorraine, who live in Arizona, and Jackie and family, who live

in Montana, enjoy the cabin every year. Teri, who lives in Maple Grove, uses the cabin whenever possible throughout the season. Now, all three own their second home with me, since Fritz suffered a major stroke and passed away on August 29, 2000.

There have been many changes since 1948: modernizing the cottages; improvements in Nisswa and Pequot Lakes; more restaurants; Bar Harbor moving to the other side of the road (without slot machines); condos at Breezy Point; additional golf courses; the dance hall across Lower Cullen Lake is now the Nisswa Legion Club; wider highways; larger boats and pontoons; and the main lodge demolished for a new year round home.