SOUTH MANITOU MEMORIAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Dedicated to the preservation of our history in order that we may pass the light of our symbol to the future generation.

P.O. Box 177
Empire, Michigan 49630
November 2002

2001/2002 Vol.13, No.3

Membership Audit ...

Organizations are usually able to keep up-to-date membership records by recording dues payments. Since SMMS membership is free, the task is more of a challenge for us.

The South Manitou Memorial Society needs to hear from you. At this point the Board needs to know what the extent of the actively interested membership is. Can you take a moment right now to reaffirm your interest by returning the enclosed card, using the online form, or calling the following toll-free number?

www.southmanitou.org/members/

877-842-7658

... and A Call for Comments!

People once lived on South Manitou. For a 100-years, loggers, immigrant farmers, light-keepers and seamen called the place "home". Children were born there. Old folks died. There were moments of great personal happiness and pride, and times of devastating tragedy and shame.

But things change. By the early 1950's, it was mostly all over. Life on the Island had become extremely hard and lonely. One by one, the farms shut down. The Coast Guard left. The Post Office closed. There was little reason to remain, and most didn't. As the Island's human history ended, its natural history resurged as the predominant development force.

Thirty-five years passed. Then a small group of Island natives and former summer residents made a pact; they decided it would be nice to get together once a year at mid-summer to renew acquaintances and reminisce about the "good old days" on South Manitou. Some had relatives buried on the Island and were abashed by the neglect. Gravesites had fallen into shameful states of disrepair. Indeed, many were lost in the weeds. The group dedicated itself to recovering the Island's cemeteries and outlying burial places, and seeing to their decent future maintenance. Each Those who were able lent a hand, while others gave of their treasures, and in time the burial places were restored as decent memorials and final resting places for their honored dead.

Within a few years, the South Manitou Memorial Society had materially accomplished its mission.

Today, many of those who were most invested in that mission have themselves been lost to the inexorable passage of time. Mortality is a fact of human life. Moreover, we mortals are apt to remember our ancestors only through two generations, then our dead abide only as names on tombstones, their graves unadorned by flowers and their rest undisturbed by visitors.

As a consequence of these realities, our original purposes have grown increasing irrelevant to a broader segment of our membership, and we have experienced a natural drift towards expanding our mission to include the preservation and interpretation of the Island's human history and cultural heritage.

Perhaps because the change occurred gradually and not really by design, this new agenda was never actually articulated, debated, officially adopted or otherwise recognized as a watershed in the life of the organization. At some point we found year thereafter they met at Empire and on the Island.

ourselves struggling with questions about who we are and what we are up to, and hard pressed to come up with any definitive answers. Some therefore find themselves stuck in the old paradigm with nothing to do, since it no longer affords many opportunities to be meaningfully involved. Others are interested in embracing the new agenda, but are unable to enlist the full-fledged moral and financial support of the membership, without which their ideas and proposals are soon frustrated.

At this point, the Society probably serves the interests of those who enjoy an opportunity to get together once a year for a brief moment of camaraderie and remembrance. Unfortunately, the minimal attendance at this year's events suggests this limited agenda will not be sufficient to permit its continuation as a meaningful and financially viable entity.

The possibility of our formal dissolution therefore arises. In that case, our by-laws provide that all of the assets of the Corporation be dedicated to the purchase and erection of a memorial honoring the former inhabitants of South Manitou Island, with any remainder given to the Park Service or another relevant non-profit organization. In other words, we would buy a $40,000 statue ... probably for the Island's Main Cemetery ... then forever close our doors. This would be a fundamentally legitimate choice.

The alternative would seem to be to adopt and pursue a new agenda focused on a more aggressive advocacy for South Manitou Island as a part of the Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore, according to the purposes originally envisaged for the park, and in recognition of today's rapidly expanding need for retreats and recreational resources.

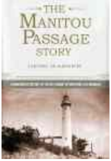
The reality is that the National Park Service and other groups would doubtless meet such an agenda with staunch and powerful opposition. That has traditionally been the case. The significance of achievement and accomplishments would be a function of the Society's ability to apply the persuasive power of money and influence. This is also a reality of dealing with large-scale public entities. To succeed in this vein, we would therefore need to recruit a much larger membership, achieve the involvement of influential and distinguished individuals, and develop highly successful fund-raising strategies. A challenging undertaking, to be sure!

Your feedback is important. While no action can be taken on such matters without a vote of the general membership, comments delivered in this mode are certain to have an impact upon the ultimate decision-making process.

As you reaffirm your interest in SMMS membership, use the opportunity to also make your thinking about the future of the organization known.

Authors - Copyright Holders

If you have ever published a book, have an unpublished work, or are the custodian of a copyright for a book about South Manitou, may we convert your work to an eBook?



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The conversion will be done by an SMMS volunteer editors at no charge to you or the organization. Your book will be offered for sale as a fund-raising item, and delivered immediately by electronic transfer from the SMMS Web site.

For more information and to see what eBooks are all about, visit www.southmanitou.org/ebooks/.

SMMS Newsletter Archive

Previous issues of the SMMS Newsletter are now available on the Web site. The newsletters have been converted to HTML for quick downloading, and can therefore be viewed using any Web browser. If you're new to the Society, you can learn all about our history and past activities by browsing through this collection. Old timers will appreciate the opportunity to review and reminisce. This searchable archive contains unique essays about the Island's natural and human history and cultural traditions, and is therefore a great resource for writers and genealogical researchers!

The archive contains all but the original two

So where do you stand? Is it time to fold up our tent, or roll up our sleeves? Are you willing to participate aggressively in a new agenda ... or support it financially? Is there a middle ground? Do you have opinions to share? Do you care one way or another?

issues (prior to 1990) of the newsletter, which have apparently been forever lost? (Got 'em? Call 877-842-7658.) See

www.southmanitou.org/members/newsletters/

Synopsis of Minutes ...

July 2002 Meeting

Our annual meeting was held at the Township Hall in Empire, Michigan on July 27, 2002. President Don Morris called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. Approximately thirty-two members attended. Secretary Joni Carlson provided the official minutes of the 2001 meeting. A motion to accept the minutes as presented was offered, seconded and passed by the members present.

Treasurer Joe Orbeck provided a report on the Society's financial situation as of June 30, 2002. Acceptance of his report was moved, seconded and passed.

Don Morris presented an update on the SLBE General Management Plan Alternatives, focusing on where the process was at, and the formulation of a response from SMMS. A discussion of issues affecting South Manitou Island ensued, including concerns about the wilderness designation, roads and trails, preservation of farms and island dwellings, the cemetery and access to the western dunes.

Kathy Bietau offered an update on the outlying gravesite project. Visiting to the sites in June, volunteers found that poison ivy and encroaching vegetation prevented their being located and marked. An environmental assessment might be necessary to clear paths to these sites. That document would need to be written by the National Park before our group could volunteer to clear and mark these paths.

The new SMMS brochure and Web site were introduced. The Web address is www.southmanitou.org. Locations where the brochure is, and could be distributed were discussed.

The membership was alerted to presently vacant volunteer positions and opportunities. The vacant positions are Newsletter Editor and Picnic Organizer. An upcoming volunteer opportunity involves painting the interior of the South Manitou Island Schoolhouse.

The meeting ended with an announcement regarding the Island Outing planned for the next day, being officially adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Synopsis by Kathy Bietau

GMP Sinks in Protest Storm

Summer of 2002 turned out to be unexpectedly stormy for SLBE officials, and their preliminary 20-year general management "plan" finally foundered and sunk in early October.

The plan in question was prepared under the stewardship of then Superintendent Ivan Miller. It was first published and distributed in the fall of 1999, as a set of preliminary working proposals designed to engender public debate and comment, as required by law and park policy. The published document was rather highly polished and very nicely packaged; perhaps that was its Achilles heel … it didn't look very "preliminary".

Most recipients focused on the word "plan" rather than "preliminary" and "alternatives". Few liked anything they saw, and storms of protest quickly began to gather. Before it was all over, county governments, state agencies and executives, congressmen, newspapers, a broad array of non-profit organizations, and hundreds of individuals were writing letters, voting resolutions, publishing articles and making phone calls.

Finally, Congressmen Dave Camp (R-Midland), Peter Hoekstra (R-Holland) and Lt. Governor Dick Posthumus ganged up on Dan Smith at the NPS and Craig Manson at the Department of Interior. The response of the Federal officials was, "It has been determined that the best course of action at this time is to withdraw the plan and cease (GMP) development processes for an undetermined amount of time."

This came as a surprise to local park officials, who apparently had no warning that their bosses in Washington were about to trash their work. At that moment, new Superintendant Dusty Shultz had no comment other than, "We'll just wait until we get some direction from the Department of Interior."

In a subsequent note, Ms Shultz wrote about the nature of the NPS planning process, and assured, "Three things specifically stay in the forefront of our minds:

- You care deeply for the rich heritage and resources of this area …
- You are fiercely dedicated to ensuring that these precious resources are available for the enjoyment of all people, regardless of age or disability …
- You project the strongest sense of community in the preservation and protection of the resources so that you, your grandchildren and your great grandchildren can all share in the memorable experiences of this special place.

Complementary Copies

Know someone who might find the SMMS Newsletter interesting? Send their name and address to PO Box 177 or editor@southmanitou.org and we'll mail a copy of the latest issue with your complements (or anonymously, if you wish.)

We also share your love of this national treasure." (For the full text of the note, please see planning.den.nps.gov/. search term: "sleeping bear".)

Meanwhile, the "plan" has disappeared from the "NPS Planning Website".

Treasurer's Report ...

TREASURY REPORT

South Manitou Memorial Society

September 30, 2002

ASSETS	**9-30-02**
Glenn Furst Memorial Fund	$ 10,000.00
Jack Phillips Memorial Fund C.D.	1,783.72
Huntington C.D.	15,035.65
Huntington Money Market Account	8,155.10
Empire National Bank Checking Account	1,697.78
TOTAL ASSETS	$ 36,672.35

Submitted by Joe Orbeck - SMMS Treasurer

SPIRIT OF THE BEAR

Complementary Copies

There's a new kid on the block! As a response to the Lakeshore's General Management Plan Alternatives, and recognizing a need to bring the various existing advocacy organizations together in at least a loose coalition, ***Citizens for Access to the Lakeshore*** (*"CAL"* for short) was officially formed July 31st.

Headquartered in Beulah, the new group played an important role in convincing the Department of Interior that it was time for NPS to begin "Reviewing the Situation". While personally visiting elected state and federal officials, the group aggressively challenged the legality of the wilderness emphasis that, in its view, has wrongly influenced NPS decision-making over the years.

Want to know more? A copy of the current CAL Newsletter is available for your inspection on our Web site (with permission); find it at ...

http://www.southmanitou.org/downloads/cal.pdf

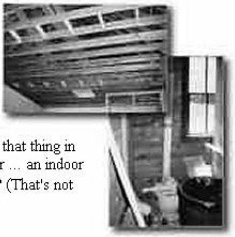
At the moment you can add your name to the list of CAL members by sending $15.00 (annual dues for a family membership) to P.O. Box 96 Beulah, MI 49617.

Dee & Harvey Rocheleau, SMMS Volunteers, roll up their sleeves on the Island!

Dee and Harvey Rocheleau, SMMS Members, volunteered their time on South Manitou Island for four days following our Annual Island Outing this year.

After painting the porch on the Marie and Mike Smith house in the village, they built a 10-foot extension to complete the cemetery front-facing fence at the Main Cemetery then cleared weeds from around the cemetery perimeter fence and around the trees inside.

Meanwhile, the camera also found NPS maintenance personnel beginning demolition work at the historic SMI schoolhouse, in preparation of a complete interior restoration. But wait ...!



... what's that thing in the corner ... an indoor ***PRIVY??*** (That's not "native".)

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

It's not too late. It's never too late. Think about helping out with the newsletter! Contributors are always needed, or as the "Editor" you can take charge of its composition and coordinate the production and mailing activities. If publishing isn't your cup-of-tea, how about "fun"! Become part of the planning and coordination for the SMMS annual picnic, meeting and Island outing. Write Box 177, or use the volunteer form on southmanitou.org.

From the Park Service ...

Windows Restored and Flammable Storage Building Returned to the Lighthouse Complex

The South Manitou Island Lighthouse, Dwelling, and Fog Whistle Building have a new look. Gone are the plywood shutters that have covered the windows for years, thanks to funds awarded to the park for window repair and reinstallation.

The first step was to remove all windows from these structures and have the broken windows and missing panes replaced. The windows were removed from the island before the 2001 winter. A local contractor spent the winter re-glazing the windows, and the park began reinstallation in May 2002. The tower windows were the first to be installed so that summer tours would not be impacted. The remaining windows were reinstalled in August and September before the island closed for the 2002 winter months.

The plan is to keep shutters off the windows above the ground level to provide light into the structure and provide some natural ventilation, as long as they remain in place and unimpaired.

Those of you who have not ventured to South Manitou and since September will be surprised to see a welcome addition to the Lighthouse Complex ... and something missing from behind the U.S. Life-Saving Service Dwelling. Thanks to volunteer efforts by Link Construction of Twin Lake, Michigan, the round and metal Flammable Storage Building is again on its original site between the Lighthouse and the Fog Whistle Building.

The park and visitors have both been anticipating when the metal Flammable Storage Building would be returned to its original location. Last year the park maintenance and cultural resource office set out to see if anything remained of the original foundation. Upon looking at historic photographs and surveying the site, it was discovered that a large shrub and a mound of sand were covering the original foundation. After removing the shrub and sand, we discovered a brick lined concrete pad outlining where the building once stood.

Park mason Bill Love, with assistance from Shon Davis and *Michigan Works* students from Benzie County, repaired the pad so it could again support the structure. The site was made ready for Link Construction to relocate the structure the precisely the exact placement. It needed to be properly aligned with the sidewalk, with the door opening and rings on the pad properly positioned with respect to the interior shelves. All of this was compounded by the fact that our equipment was operating on a very sandy and sloping site. Although we had originally estimated the work would take only a few hours, we found that it took a full day to perfect and complete *each step!*

How to get the seven-foot tall, five-foot diameter shelf back inside the interior of the round building was a discussion that consumed most of the weekend. Could the structure be raised over the top and down around? No, the tractors were not suitable for this type of maneuver. Could the structure be tilted and the shelves inserted from the bottom. No, again the tractors and equipment on the island were not suitable. The solution was to dismantle the shelves by removing their rusting rivets, then reassemble them inside the structure, as had been done so long ago, but this time using threaded fasteners instead of rivets.

After three days of long hours and hard work, it was finally time to leave the island. The sight of the complex from the boat upon leaving the island was incredible. We wondered all weekend if the results would ultimately justify all the extra effort that we had expended. The answer is definitely *"Yes!"* The lighthouse scene now seems much more complete. It was not apparent that something was missing until it was returned to the site. The structure fills a void in the landscape that was hardly noticeable until the building was returned. Then the hole had been there was readily apparent.

As I now look at all the postcards and photographs of the lighthouse, I see the obvious hole on the landscape in scenes missing a crucial part of the lighthouse's history. I then realize that all these are now obsolete, and wonder how soon someone will capture the image that will next become the standard snapshot in people's minds.

I was present to see this change, as someone else was present as the structure was originally constructed ... and then again when it was rolled to the village and set behind the Coast Guard Station.

The little Flammable Storage Building has now come full circle, and so has its story.

Kimberly Mann
SLBE Park Historic Architect

weekend after Labor Day. Moving the shelves and building to the site was the easy part ... especially after discovering the correct center of gravity and balancing the right amount of weights on the island tractors being used. The hard part was positioning the structure on top of the original foundation with

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A Little Boy's Rememberance

I was conceived on South Manitou Island on a snowy Sunday, New Year's Eve, December 31, 1939. I guessed this late in life ... my surmise arising from the fact of my birth date: September 23, 1940.

I suppose there wasn't much more for a young couple to do on the Island on a Sunday, so perhaps I was just a product of boredom. However, I like to think that I happened as the culmination of a somewhat obstreperous New Year's Eve party. My dad would have thought that an ideal way to get a New Year off to a good start.

This could, of course, be just a crass conjecture. Yet, Dad's side of the family, at least those on the Island, always seemed to be up for a good time when a holiday came around. They weren't the kind of people who'd be interested in spending a quiet New Year's Eve at home reading a book or listening to the radio. His great-uncle Bill (Haas) is reputed to have been one of the Island's foremost bootleggers, always having a ready supply of hard apple cider (and a secreted stash of "white lightning".) I imagine the party would have been held at Dad's grandfather's farm, since bachelor-farmer Uncle Bill also had a reputation for crudity and his place was apparently somewhat "rustic". Conversely, I remember Great-Grandma and Grandpa (Henry and Maggie) Haas as congenial people, who always seemed happy to see visitors approaching, and whose premises were always found neat and orderly. Even the privy was nicely painted in white and shades of gray ... a "three-holer", with accommodations specially sized for men, women and children.

Under those circumstances, at the time of my conception my dad would most likely have been "tight". During the time that I knew him, "the hard stuff" always made him ill, rapidly rendering him unconscious. Thus, he usually avoided it. He compensated for that character flaw by consuming beer voraciously. Whenever anyone came to visit, he would immediately fetch a couple of beers, never bothering his guest with a choice. Growing up on the Island had apparently taught him that such a question was superfluous, possibly even inhospitable. Moreover, whenever he went visiting, it was always with a "six-pack" or two under his arm. He was always true to his Island heritage in this respect.

Unfortunately, our tenure as a next-generation Island family abruptly ended only a few months after my birth.

German belligerence towards U.S. shipping grew rapidly following the passage of the provocative Lend-Lease Act in March of 1941, and our involvement in World War II escalated accordingly. That same month, 10 of our best Coast Guard cutters were transferred on Lend-Lease to Great Britain for duty in the North Sea. Late in May, President Roosevelt declared an unlimited state of national emergency. A few days after that, four large ships were re-commissioned as transport vessels to be used in ferrying British and Canadian troops from Canada to Africa, India and China. In June, the President signed an executive order ordering some 2,100 Coast Guard officers and men to crew these four transports and to serve in supporting ships. Most of those assigned to the latter were surfmen from Great Lakes lifeboat stations They were called to serve in the landing craft carried by the larger vessels and to instruct others in their use. Unfortunately, the "Winds of War" had reached the Manitou Passage, and I became a "war orphan".

My dad ("Lon" in Crowner's book) had joined the Coast Guard on the Island on his 17th birthday, in October of 1927. He served on South Manitou, and at the Lifeboat Station at Sleeping Bear. Up to that point, he had probably never been more than a few miles away from home. In the spring of 1941, he and most other local surfmen were called as part of the special 2,100-man Coast Guard contingent, leaving the local stations with only a skeleton crew. He was later transferred to convoy escort duty in the Atlantic and Mediterranean, aboard a Coast Guard-operated destroyer escort, "USS Savidge (DE-386). Although he did come back on furlough once or twice, I don't remember ever laying eyes on my father until he returned after the end of the war, in the summer of 1946. I was going on six-years old.

When he was called for sea duty, Dad insisted on moving his family from South Manitou Island to Grand Haven. I'm not sure why. Maybe it was because his sister Lenore lived there, and would be able to keep an eye on us. His Uncle Harrison (Haas), another island boy, had also been the Chief at the Coast Guard's Grand Haven Lifeboat Station, so it was an area he was familiar with. On the other hand, it might have been to keep us away from my mother's side of the family, the Kelderhouses, who lived on the mainland at Port Oneida and Glen

My mother, on the other hand, did not drink ... at least that was her official position. She would often claim, "I don't have to drink to have fun!" (But she had more fun when she did.) On occasions such as New Years Eve, she might agree to a "highball" (or two.) She originally came to the Island as a schoolteacher, so on that night some might have expected that sort of propriety, although she was no longer employed in that capacity. In fact, she had inherited a somewhat puritanical attitude from her mother, a strict German Evangelical Lutheran. By her straight-laced behavior, she was naturally suited to her role as schoolteacher, and some fifteen years later she would return to college, earn a degree, and eventually retire after some twenty years in that profession.

In the years that followed, even after I was married with children of my own, my mother seemed to particularly enjoy sitting with me as the clock stuck midnight on the last day of each year. I had the sense that was important to both of us for reasons neither of us understood. It became a ritual. I suspect that might have been a "sentimental journey" for her ... back to better, simpler times ... when she was still in love and living on the beautiful South Manitou in the midst of so many interesting and congenial kinfolk and neighbors.

Arbor.

But our hearts were not in Grand Haven. After a short sojourn, my mother, against my father's wishes and much to his ire, moved us back "up north" ... to a little house at 623 West 8th Street in Traverse City.

Back when my mother was hired to teach in the Island's little one-room schoolhouse, she boarded in the home of the School Board's President, August Warner. She developed a very close relationship with August and Rosie Warner even before it became obvious that they would become her future in-laws. During the time we lived in Traverse, she took us over to the Island as often as she could find a reason for going. Late in 1944, she found herself carrying a third child, who would be born early in the next summer. As soon as school was out in June, she took us over to the Island for what would prove to be our last visit. My sister and I lived with our grandparents on the Island for the rest of that summer.

"I remember ...?" Much to my dismay, I am not able to remember much of anything about the Island. When does a little boy's memory begin?

I do remember being carsick and seasick. When we would go to the Island, my Aunt Florence (Egler) would drive us from Traverse to the dock at Glen Haven in her wood-paneled Ford station wagon. The car had leather upholstery, the smell of which I learned to associate with carsickness. As many times as she'd provide the transportation, I'd puke in her car. I would already be sick when we arrived at Glen Haven, where the Coast Guard boat would be waiting at the dock. Having learned about "that Warner kid" the hard way, the Coast Guards would sit me down on the back of the boat with a bucket between my legs before leaving for the Island.

The Glen Haven dock was long, wide, scary, and busy with activity. Standing on the dock and looking through the cracks between its planks, I could see the lake foaming below as the waves rushed through its spiling towards the beach. I was, of course, wide-eyed and always in the way, but nobody thought it would be a good idea to put me in the boat any earlier than necessary. I can still hear the mellow bubbly-sounding rumble of the boat's engine as it rolled with the waves next to the dock, its exhaust port alternately dipping below the surface of the water, then back into the air. I can

Outside the house, the south point was then a rather barren flat expanse of sand, with very little vegetation, so it was easy for Grandma to keep her eye on us as we played outside. I spent many hours playing in the sand between her front porch and the beach.

These times preceded electricity on the island, and mechanical refrigeration in general. In Traverse we had an "ice box" in our kitchen, and the "ice man" came regularly to replace the cake of ice that kept it cold inside. I suppose Grandma and Grandpa's house had one too. Canning and pickling were essential skills for any Island homemaker, and Grandma spent a lot of time during the late summer months putting up all sorts of canned goods for use during the coming winter. She was especially good at pickling things, and her table always offered an interesting variety of unknown, but good-tasting things. We especially liked "Slim Jims" which, I guess, were actually pickled watermelon rind, and would greedily gobble up as many as she cared to put on the table.

still taste the smells of those moments ... a mixture of "seawater", the freshly-painted picket boat and gasoline exhaust fumes. I have always associated that odor with cleanliness, orderliness and adventure ... no doubt a mental relic from growing up around Coast Guard stations and boats. The Coast Guard always kept things "ship-shape".

I suppose I was usually busy vomiting during the trip from Glen Haven to South Manitou, since I have no recollection of anything between casting off from the dock and looking up to finally discover the South Manitou Light just ahead. Even now, a half-century later, I feel a slight wave of nausea as I see in my mind's eye a young Sailor in dungarees, blue chambray shirt and white sailor cap letting go the lines, then jumping from the dock onto the bow of the boat. I can still feel the trepidation growing as I recall the bow swinging away from the dock ... the gentle rumbling of its engine suddenly changing to a powerful growl as the propeller digs in to get us underway. And I can still feel the relief at seeing that wonderful white Lighthouse towering above us as we at last reach our destination, and round the point into the tranquility of South Manitou's beautiful bay.

And then there was Grandma Warner, waiting for us on the Coast Guard dock with arms folded, a big grin, and just about ready to bubble over with happiness. An arrival at the "Golden Gates" could not have been more exciting and joyful! We loved Grandma and Grandpa Warner and their island. As often as we came here, I felt like I was "home again".

> *(Could it be that we are transcendentally connected in some way to the place where our life begins ... that no matter how far we might roam, that place will always be "home"?)*

Grandma and Grandpa Warner lived in what the National Park now calls the "Johnson house" ... the last place on the Island's south point, between the Coast Guard station and the lighthouse. The boardwalk passed their front porch, and the beach lay only about twenty yards beyond that. It was a distinctive-looking place, built more or less square with a high four-sided peaked roof. It didn't really feel like a "house", at least not like a city house. The 'ambience' was more like that of a summer cottage, or other temporary quarters of some kind. I'm not sure why that's the imagery I recall. Maybe it was its rather rustic 'décor', the cracks under the door, the smell of the wood-burning cook stove, or the sounds of the lake and the nearby foghorn.

Most of what she canned or pickled, she grew herself. During the summer she cultivated a rather large plot of her own, a vegetable garden located on her parents' (Henry and Maggie Haas) farm on the other side of Lake Florence. Every few days or so Grandma, my sister and I would go over to work in the garden. Grandpa would usually drive us over there early in the morning in a Model T Ford. We'd spend the day weeding and hoeing, then walk back home in the afternoon. The two-mile trek was a long walk for my little legs, and I could usually be seen lagging quite far behind Grandma and Judy. Grandma often recited the story about the day John Tobin watched me trudging along on the road, dusty, totally exhausted and grumpy, and with his hands on his hips exclaimed, "Well ... and here comes old man Warner!" Apparently, that had become a familiar sight in the afternoon. That "tickled" her.

Snakes also frequented the garden, but Grandma was their mortal enemy. Whenever we would see one, she would hustle over with her hoe and deftly chop them in two. Then we would bury each half in separate holes, located well away from each other. She claimed that they would otherwise grow back together. Some of these she identified as "rattlers! Officially the Island has been known to have only Garter Snakes and Northern Ring-Necked Snakes, but it does lie in the middle of the range of the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake, a lethargic, non-aggressive, but toxic viper. The marshy areas around Lake Florence would indeed make for a perfect habitat. Perhaps she was right.

If we did a good job in the garden, we would sometimes each receive a nickel, and quickly be off down the boardwalk towards Bertha Peth's store. I held my nickel as tight as my sweaty little hands could as we ran along the planks, for fear of dropping it through the cracks and loosing it in the sand. Bertha's "store" was upstairs in one of the village houses. I remember the steep, narrow staircase and her little showcase with the candy ... and mouse traps. I seem to remember Grandma warning us to buy hard candy, not chocolate, since that would be too old and probably spoiled. I cannot recall there being anything remarkable about Bertha, but then small children would not be apt to notice an older person's eccentricities. Besides, she was not the only character on the island ... at least not in the eyes of small children.

In the evenings Grandma, Judy and I would often go beach combing, walking along the shore from the front of the house to the lighthouse, then back. Sometimes we would find a good collection of fishermen's corks, which Grandpa could make use of, since he was still setting nets in the bay.

Sometimes he would take us out with him to pull the nets, and we would help him throw suckers to the seagulls. At that time, he used only a very large rowboat. His big boats, the Lenore and Merlene, had been retired and were moldering on the beach. I assume his days as a commercial fisherman were over, and our small catch was only distributed to those few people remaining on the Island. In previous times, fishing had been a lucrative trade in the Manitou Passage, and Grandpa had served as the local agent for Dornbos Fisheries, a large packinghouse in Grand Haven.

Some days, probably Saturdays, ended with a washtub bath in Grandma's kitchen. She would pump a couple buckets of water at the little hand pump at her kitchen sink, and heat some in the teakettle on her wood-stove to take off the chill. We didn't mind bath time, because she'd always finish it by fluffing our hair briskly with a big bath towel. For some reason, we thought that was great fun and we would giggle until our sides hurt!

Such was our summer on the Island in 1945. We quickly became "Islanders" again, and never gave a thought to going back home. Too soon, the end of August (the month) was at hand, and we found ourselves on the dock to welcome the return of our mother, which signaled the beginning of a sorrowful departure. Grandma and Grandpa were left shrinking on the dock as the boat pulled away, him with a grimace and her using a little white hankie to wipe the tears that were streaming down her cheeks. Seeing her in tears was, of course, enough to make us cry too. We were, no doubt, a heartrending sight.

In years to come I would learn that the either the Hutzler's or the Haas' must have had a chicken-hearted streak. In 1953, following the death of Maggie Haas, Grandma's mother, August and Rosie moved to the mainland, into a little house at Glen Haven. In all the years that followed, whenever we'd visit, the inevitable departure would be the same; Grandma would stand on her little back porch as the car backed out of her yard, raising her little white hankie to her cheek as the tears begun to flow. My father, her eldest son, was the same way, and at some point in his life quit going to weddings and funerals because of it. In my generation, I was the recipient of the gift, the only difference between Dad and me being that I've grown proud of that inheritance, rather than ashamed. And it passes on ... our son Evan is the lucky one amongst my children, being much more softhearted than his Father and Grandfather put together! He is indeed his Great-Grandmother's heir.

were mighty proud. In that respect, it was a good thing. However, Grand Haven was a long way from South Manitou Island, both in distance and culture. The interstate highway system had yet to be built, and we didn't own a car anyway. Going "up north" meant embarking on a journey back then. When we did go, it was usually by train.

My father never expressed any interest in going back to the Island. In fact, he took much pride in having been able to escape and build a better life in the city. He felt he had done well for himself, and done well by his family. He openly scoffed at my sentiments with respect to what I thought of as "home" and "paradise", angrily asserting, "You don't know a Goddamned thing about the Island!". For that matter, I cannot recall ever hearing my grandparents speak of "good old days" on the Island, or express any desire to return, even for a visit. Perhaps it was too painful for them to think about. Since they were among the last to leave, there would have been nothing to go back to ... hardly anyone to visit.

Glen Haven was as near as I would get to South Manitou for the next 50-years. Whenever we would go there, I was always drawn to what was left of the dock, to stand for several minutes looking out at "our island". For many years, the light continued to beam its signal across the water. When it ultimately stopped, it felt like the island had finally died.

One day I found that I was no longer young. Somehow, fifty years had slipped by! As often happens at this point in one's life, I began to sense my mortality and take an interest in my roots. Feeling a need to pass on some knowledge of their ancestry to my children, my wife and I and our five children took the *Mishi Mokwa* from Leland to South Manitou one day early in the summer. The weather did not look promising that morning, and about half way out the rain disappointingly came. The downpour and the fog that attended it reduced our visibility to only the immediate vicinity, so we huddled under the shelter in the back of the boat, trying to keep dry until we arrived at the island. The rains proved occasional, and soon stopped for a while. As we stepped back out onto its bow, the boat suddenly broke out of the fog, and there she was in all her splendor ... the South Manitou Light!

Then, just around the corner was that funny-looking little house with the high peaked roof where as a child I had slept peacefully and contentedly through so many summer nights.

We walked off the dock and on to the front lawn of the Coast Guard Station, and as the others were looking for a dry spot for a picnic lunch, I hurried off alone down the boardwalk towards Grandma and Grandpa's old house. Something drew my attention to a certain spot in front of the house, between the beach and the boardwalk and I walked cautiously over to it, without knowing why. Looking down at the little weeds growing in the sand at my feet, my heart suddenly rose into my throat and I was overwhelmed by emotion.

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After the war, my father was assigned to the Grand Haven Lifesaving Station, in the position from which his uncle had been wrongly (according to family tradition) court marshaled many years before. That was a quiet triumph for Uncle Harry, and Grandma and Grandpa Warner. I'm sure they

I was suddenly and unexpectedly struck with feelings too deep and strong to understand or put into words. It was an awful melancholy for a time that was now only a faint memory, and for all the people who had been a part of it. It was the unspeakable joy of having returned *home*, at last!

True to my chicken-hearted heritage, I could do nothing more than stand there like a little boy, alone, with head bowed, quietly crying.

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Gene L Warner - November 2002

Welcome New Members

Since our last Newsletter, we've had the privilege of welcoming these new members ..

Amy & Daniel Engler
with children Alexandria & Daniel
Muskegon, MI

Dawn Frees
Wayland, MI

Sarah & Timothy Pham
with daughter Emilia
Mountain View, CA

Here's another *"Welcome!"* from the newsletter staff ... and a reminder to set aside the last weekend in July 2003 for a trip to Empire and the Island. Your fellow members are eager to become your friends.

For everyone else, remember to encourage your friends and family members to join. SMMS welcomes anyone with a special interest or other connection to the Island. A one-time $10 donation secures a lifetime personal or family membership, and sign-up is now easier than ever using our online forms!

Contributions and Gifts

Your contributions and other gifts fund SMMS projects and activities. Contributions can be made any time, in any amount, and as often as you like. Pay online using your check or credit card, or you may mail your check or money order to PO Box 177 in Empire.

Membership Contributions provide a way for you to support the work of the society voluntarily, since SMMS does not assess annual dues.

Memorial Gifts are a thoughtful way of expressing sympathy on the loss of a loved on, friend or colleague who, during their lifetime, was somehow connected with South Manitou Island, or the Society. Your gift will be promptly acknowledged with cards mailed to you and a third party you may designate ... usually the deceased's most immediate survivor. The amount of the gift is never indicated in the acknowledgment.

Testamentary Gifts (leaving money or assets to SMMS in your will) help to assure that future generations will benefit from your support of the Society. Your financial advisor can help you to determine the best plan for you.

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www.southmanitou.org

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