

# THE MCWAIN NEWS

Winter 2003

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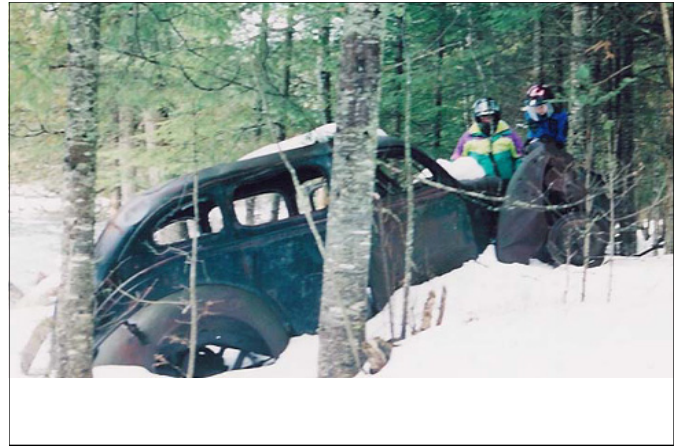
## In Search of Louise Dickinson Rich's Maine

By Bruce Whichard

Have you ever imagined what it would have been like living in the backwoods of Maine years ago?

I did, and I highly recommend several books that describe the experience during the 1930s to 1950s: *We Took to the Woods*, *Happy the Land*, and *My Neck of the Woods* by Louise Dickinson Rich, and *She Took to the Woods*, a biography of Rich written by Alice Arlen.

Louise Dickinson Rich was a Massachusetts English teacher who married Ralph Rich and moved with him to the remote Rangeley Lakes region of western Maine in 1933. After her husband's death in 1945, she supported her family writing books about their experiences. Louise's books tell of their lives in Forest Lodge on the Carry Road, located be-



Jared Whichard discovers Louise Dickinson Rich's Packard

between Lower Richardson Lake and Umbagog Lake. She relates stories about the lumber camps in the area, and of the colorful men who worked them, as well as the sportsmen who came to fly fish the beautiful Rapid River and stayed at "The Hotel" at Middle Dam. She describes her family's struggle to survive the winters in the Winter House.

After reading many of Rich's books, I wanted to see the Carry Road firsthand, and to see if Forest Lodge and the Winter House still existed. I trekked up to South Arm with my brothers and cousins and my uncle, Eddie Muzik, as our guide. Eddie had done the Richardson Lake trip many times as a camper, then as a counselor, at Camp Waganaki.

(Continued on page 3)

## Melvoyn Home Destroyed by Fire — Rodents May Have Sparked the Blaze

By Bill Hanger

A fire destroyed Rick and Bunny Melvoyn's house on Elliott Way in McWain Shores January 3. No one was injured.

The fire was discovered by Kyle Bell, son of McWain Pond Association Trustee Diane Bell, and a friend, about 11:15 p.m. The boys were riding their snowmobiles on the lake at the time and could not immediately identify the location of the fire.

Since property owners' names are seldom posted at the shoreline, the boys reported the fire and then returned in an effort to direct the Waterford Volunteer Firemen to the site. Firefighters eventually located the fire and fought it until 5 a.m. Saturday, but the house could not be saved.

Because the lake was frozen, firefighters had to draw water from an outlet near the old Springer's store to fill the tanker truck.

The house, which had a nearly-completed addition, was evaluated as a total loss. The Melvoyns' builder, Jeff Hadley, of Waterford, said that he was "only three weeks from completion." No damage was done to nearby woods or to other properties, and the Melvoyns have said they plan to rebuild as soon as possible.

According to a fire inspector, the fire may have been caused by a squirrel or other rodent that ate away insulation from wires and sparked the blaze.

# Shoreland Zoning Infractions Can Be Costly as Well as Unsightly

By Peter Leslie

The association is concerned about the occasional ignorance of Waterford's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance and the threat that illegal clearing and cutting pose to the pond. This fall, sometime between Labor Day and Columbus Day, an area was clear-cut in front of an existing cottage. Even the brush was cut to ground level.

The Advertiser-Democrat reported Nov. 21, 2002, that Waterford Code Enforcement Officer Albert Holden became aware of an illegal clearing 100 feet wide and more than 100 feet long from a camp to the water on McWain Pond. Holden reportedly said that trees up to 12 inches in diameter were taken down.

He called it a "clear violation of the state's and town's Shoreland Ordinance."

After several conversations, the property owner eventually agreed to replant 20 trees by May 15, according to Holden, who added that, absent the agreement, the town would have initiated court proceedings.

Holden told The Advertiser-Democrat that shoreland

residents should not listen to a chainsaw running all day before calling him, because that is usually too late.


This incident illustrates the problem the association faces in educating lot owners and tree services on the existence and provisions of the Shoreland Ordinance. In this case, the ownership of the lot was long-standing and the tree service was said to have done work in the area in recent years.

The association will increase its efforts to get the word out so that situations such as this do not recur.

As the newspaper article suggests, citizens are encouraged to report violations, but, even more important, if you believe an infraction is taking place, it is worth approaching your neighbor to apprise him or her of the possible consequences of having to replant trees, presumably at great expense, going to court, or having to pay a fine. If you can stop illegal cutting in the act you are helping your neighbor (who may not appreciate it at the moment), and helping the pond.

Code Enforcement Officer Al Holden can be reached through the town office, at home (743-8729) or on his cell phone (446-8940).

## Canada Geese



Flocks of Canada Geese were observed in fields near McWain Pond toward the end of the summer. As fall approached, they gathered in the evenings at the north end of the pond. They are elegant birds, but they are infamous for fouling the waters and land they inhabit. On the other hand, a quick search of the Internet reveals that there is much controversy about whether or not they represent any threat to water quality or to humans. The Maine Audubon Society informed us that they are "abundant" and are widely hunted. The geese we saw were migratory, but some do stay for the winter, especially along the seacoast. Because McWain Pond freezes early in the season, they are probably not a risk to our water quality.

— Peter Leslie

## Neighbor News

Gail and Tom Tremblay of Lincoln, N.H., are building a fine home at the north end of the pond. Their beach house is visible from the lake, but the main house is high on the hill among the trees. We welcome them to the McWain community.

David and Patty Sawyer of Bridgewater, Mass., have purchased the former Schuster property on Pride Avenue and have already begun to make improvements. Please make them feel at home.

Mark Tomaino of Bedminster, N.J., son of Bruno and Annette Tomaino, plans to marry Amy Keighley of Columbia, Md., October 25 in Baltimore. Mark is with Qwest Communications and Amy works for Merck Pharmaceuticals. Annette is the long-time Secretary of the McWain Pond Association.

Association members Sharon Smith and Bill Roy were married Sept. 28, 2002. The ceremony took place in the lodge at Camp Wigwam on Bear Pond. The Roys are year-round residents of McWain Shores. Congratulations!

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**The McWain Pond Association Annual Meeting  
will be held at Camp Birch Rock  
July 19 at 10 a.m.**

July 2003						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## President's Message

By Peter Leslie

I spent my first summer on McWain Pond 33 years ago and I have not missed a summer since. When I was elected president of the McWain Pond Association in September 2002, I reflected on changes that have occurred over those years and on the challenge we face to preserve our wonderful Maine pond.

Not much has changed on the water in all these years. The pond is still peaceful most of the time, we still hear loons at night and the water quality, while fragile, is still pretty good. I think the number of boaters using the pond at any given time has not increased as much as one would have expected as new camps have been built. There is plenty of room for all types of craft to use the pond at the same time. The operators of the bigger and faster motorboats have used their craft safely and respected the smaller vessels out there with them. The bigger boats seem quieter than they used to be, perhaps because they have cleaner and quieter four-cycle engines. I paddle or sail on the lake almost every day and I feel positively about how we are sharing our common waters.

The major threat to our pond does not, however, come from the boats we use, from the run-off from our lots, or from the acid rain that will only increase since the Clean Air Act has been significantly relaxed, some would even say gutted. The major risk is MILFOIL. If this invasive plant gets into our water, the pond will be choked to a depth of 20 feet! I have seen this plague with my own eyes and it is dreadful.

Last year I drove to Augusta to testify about the lake in Minnesota where I spent my boyhood summers. Fifty years ago this Sebago-sized lake outside Minneapolis was pristine. You could see the walleyed pike hit the lure, you could see the bottom 25 feet down and most people drank the water without treating it. Last summer my cousin took me out in her boat. The propellers clogged with these weeds. We had to back up and go forward several times to clear the prop. The water was brown. The beaches were no longer used. It was said that mice could run along the surface. Huge harvester barges cut channels to marinas and anchorage.

The introduction of milfoil would ruin our pond. Every lot owner should learn how to avoid its introduction. Basically, this means being sure that if your boat has been on another body of water that it is absolutely free of any vegetative matter when it is launched into McWain Pond. Inspection should be made of the boat, its motor, oars, anchor rode, fishing gear, or anything that might hold a fragment of milfoil. One fragment can start the weed growing in our water. Please make sure that any visitors observe the same precautions.

The association tried unsuccessfully two years ago to convince Waterford selectmen to let voters decide whether the association could disallow "jet skis" on McWain Pond. There has been very little use of the machines on the pond, in any case, but if members are interested in approaching town officials once more, please let me know.

Up to my election as president of the McWain Pond Association my only contribution to the welfare of the pond, other than being a contributing member of the association, has been informal shoreline trash collector. I paddle or row regularly around the shore of our pond for exercise, to observe wildlife, and to enjoy the peace and beauty. I also pick up trash and lost items that have floated away from their owners. These usually drift into undeveloped areas of the shoreline. Occasionally, I discover a paddle, fender, or life jacket. Call me if you are missing something and consider writing your name on equipment.

This year I noticed an abandoned, disintegrating dock with its Styrofoam floats slowly grinding into pieces on a remote section of the eastern shore, sending a blizzard of tiny white Styrofoam pellets along the shore. I am told these unsightly fragments would take hundreds of years, if not thousands, to biodegrade. Early one morning I took some tools in my rowboat and removed what was left of the Styrofoam floats. It took two runs to the dump in my car to dispose of those floats. That was a record; usually, I just carry out small stuff.

I mostly do this for fun, but it is just one example of how we can each contribute a little to maintaining and preserving our common heritage. There are more important things than picking up flotsam: keeping out milfoil, controlling erosion, respecting the Shoreland Zoning ordinance, and safe boating, to name a few. Together we can protect this pond. Let's do it!

Looking forward to another summer on McWain,

*Peter Leslie*

(continued from page 1) **Searching for Louise**

We motored across Lower Richardson in small outboards and enjoyed exploring Middle Dam, Lower Dam, and the Carry Road.

Over the years I have returned many times, in summer, fall, and winter. My wife Arlene, and son Jared love the area as I do. Each visit, we see or learn something new about the area. We have camped there in the summer and ridden in on snowmobiles in the winter. Jared even discovered Louise's old Packard, rusting away in the woods near the roaring Rapid River. We had a picnic lunch in February when it was 15 degrees outside, on the front porch of the Winter House, looking upstream at the remains of Lower Dam. One of the most memorable visits was a summer trip when we met up with Aldro French, an alumnus of Camp Waganaki, and current owner of Forest Lodge. Aldro is a Maine guide who just loves to fly fish (and tell stories, as Louise did) and has left Forest Lodge basically as it was when Louise lived there.

If any of you want to learn more about this area of Oxford County, I recommend reading some of Rich's books. When you are ready to go exploring, contact me, as I am always ready for another excursion back to Louise's neck of the woods.

