

A Fireman's Fire

At one time, Middy Daniels either owned or managed all the property between his camp next to us and the Acworth line near the end of the point. Much of that cove was probably the most unattractive place on the lake. In the Summer the lily pads grew so thick that one could barely get a boat through them. Outboard motors would almost immediately become fouled by the long stringy stems that grew up from the floor of the lake. There were plenty of pickerel there, but they were hard to get to. Every cast of a lure was subject to getting snagged on the weeds.

At some point, Middy decided to reclaim that part of the lake, sell his camp next to us, and build himself a new camp at the end of the cove. His first task was to clear out all the detritus of logging operations and nature's undergrowth. When he had chopped up everything in sight and piled it into a large burn pile, he set a match to it. As a professional fireman he knew that burning brush should be done during a rainy day, so he waited for such a day, then set it off.

When the burn pile had exhausted itself he returned to his home in Claremont. An experienced logger and professional fireman, he should have known that the soil under his burn pile was loaded with dried out tree roots and compacted moss, but somehow it slipped his mind. It took a day or two for the smoldering underground fire to travel along the tree roots and burst through the ground and start to consume the entire property. The fire department was called to put the fire out, which they did with much effort, as water had to be hauled from the lake for firefighting. Middy had a hard time living this down at the fire station.

Middy was like an uncle to me. He taught me how to sharpen an axe, fell a tree and catch fish. One day when I was not around, he nailed a poster on a tree near our dock that read "No Fishing". It had a picture of a little boy with a guilty look fishing under a "No Fishing" sign. I was too young to get the joke and was all upset that I couldn't fish any more.

Eventually, Middy did build his new camp at the end of the cove, and he sold the camp next to us to Porter Dexter, an optometrist from Claremont. Porter happened to be a member of my father's orchestra, so it was a welcome change. The Dexters had three young children.

Porter was a bit of a technology geek, and we finally got our first phone in our camp. Porter strung a wire from his camp to ours and installed an intercom. One push of a button and the phone at the other end would ring. It was ideal for things like, "come over for cocktails and bring ice." The Dexters also could put their kids to bed and leave the phone off the hook so they could listen on the intercom in our camp for any disturbances at their camp.