

My Friend Otis

Otis Vaughn has been my good friend for over 70 years. His parents, Bill and Polly emigrated from New York City in the early 1940's. Bill was a professional musician who played oboe in the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, and Polly was a Ziegfeld Girl. They purchased a farm way up on Mica Mine Road, (which they did not farm) and Bill took a day job in a factory in Windsor, Vermont. Bill joined my father's orchestra playing clarinet and sax. Otis and I soon became fast friends. My parents and I would visit them at their farm, and they would visit us at the lake.

Each year my parents would host a picnic for members of his orchestra. This is the only picture of Otis, his mother, and me at one of these events I can find.



During blueberry season my mom and I would go to their farm and pick blueberries which grew in abundance in the area. High bush blueberries are great, because they can be picked standing up. Even a kid could pick blueberries, although there was a strong temptation to eat what you picked. On other visits Otis and I would venture to the mica mine to explore the excavations.

Commuting from the farm was problematic during mud season as Mica Mine Road was unpaved for its full length. Bill and Polly decided to sell the farm and move to beautiful downtown Unity. They purchased a home on the downside of the main road leading into Unity. I don't know why, but the Vaughns acquired a work horse, and it was housed in a barn on their property. Otis and I would occasionally climb onto the horse and ride around the woods behind their home.

Polly died when Otis was young, and he was raised forward by his father. Eventually, Bill sold the home in Unity and enrolled Otis in Stevens High School, where he was a classmate of mine. We continued to be friends throughout high school and thereafter.

I went on to college and graduate school and lost contact with Otis for the six years I was in that loop. I then joined the US Air Force and was assigned to Westover Air Force in Chicopee Falls, MA. As it

happened Otis was working at Pratt and Whitney in nearby Connecticut, so we re-connected. When I was discharged I returned to Claremont to go into business. A short time later Otis moved back to Claremont and built a home for himself. We maintained our friendship and spent much time reminiscing about life on the lake.

Otis has since moved on, first to California to work for a major aircraft company, then to retire to Colorado, and now to settle in Las Vegas. Until recently we have met each year at our camp on Lake Winnepesaukee to renew our friendship. We sold our camp last year and moved to Florida. Otis hates Florida, so I guess we'll have to find neutral territory to meet.