

My Early Summers (Part Two)

There was a routine to life on Crescent Lake for us. We would get up in the morning to brush our teeth and have breakfast. My dad would take the car and drive to work in Claremont having been given a grocery list for things that were needed replenish the food supply.

My dad had taken the guts out of an old Philco console radio (AM) and built it into the wall of the living room. After making beds and cleaning up the kitchen my mom might listen to some of the soap operas of the day. I would usually spend some time playing in my sand pile. Because we lacked a second car, my mom and I were stuck on the lake until dad returned.

My mom had a few friends who had cottages on the lake, so occasionally we would go by boat to visit them. All we had was a small row boat, so we limited most of our outings to the west end of the lake. Although I knew how to row a boat, I was too young to go the long haul, so it was up to my mom to get us to our destination. "Aunt" Veronica Stockwell had a camp on the Acworth side on the point just off the sand bar. Mrs. Thayer was on the Northwest end of the lake. As a special treat we sometimes would go to Dion's Store at the west end to buy a treat.

I learned to swim at an early age, so much of my time each day was spent in the water. I soon learned that there was a rock on the bottom just off the end of our dock, so if I set my feet of that rock when I dived off the dock, I wouldn't have to plunk my feet in the sticky goo all around it. I could also swim further out to the larger rocks to the East our dock.

In the late afternoon I would begin to anticipate my dad's return from work. Around the time we expected him to return we would often start walking up the road to meet him. My dad wasn't the most punctual person, as he might stop along the way to call on his insurance clients. As a result, mom and I sometimes walked a lot further than we had intended.

Once united, the family performed the usual ritual of cocktails, dinner and listening to the radio. Programs such as "The Jack Benny Show," "Amos and Andy," and "Your Hit Parade" came in clear as a bell. For some reason dad didn't like Frank Sinatra, so we had to listen to him grumble during his appearance on the show. Then - "bedtime for me."

My dad had spent a while in New York pursuing a career in music, and he had connections in the music industry. Sometimes, if he got back early from work we would cross the lake to visit his friend Hue Wright and his wife. They were from New York City, and Hue was Cab Calloway's business manager. I never got to meet Cab Calloway though.

We occasionally had guests who were business associates of my father. Representatives of insurance companies would call on his office, and he would invite them to come to the camp for dinner. They would arrive dressed in their city suits looking just like city slickers. The first thing he would do was present each of them with flannel shirt, encourage them to take off their suit coats and ties and put on the shirts. The transformations were remarkable.

Other guests might be members of my dad's orchestra and their wives. These people were more attuned to my dad's personality, and were quite comfortable with Crescent Lake life. People were more used to making their own fun then, so the guests were always open to a little fun. During World War II there was usually a moment when one of the guests would plead, "Buster, do Hitler!" With great fanfare he would retire to the bedroom to prepare himself for his performance. He would quickly return with his black hair parted in the middle, holding a black comb under his nose as a simulated mustache, right arm raised in the Heil Hitler salute and commence to real off some gibberish that made no sense, but sounded like Hitler. The guests would convulse in laughter.