

## REMEMBERING WALLED LAKE

### SUMMER VATIONS

THESE STORIES WERE TOLD BY WILLIAM KELLERMAN

WRITTEN AS REMEMBERED BY PHYLLIS KELLERMAN

I (Phyllis) recall travelling from Detroit bumper to bumper down Maple Road on a sweltering summer's day. My husband (William) was driving us to the family cottages at Walled Lake. The car was packed with clothing, food, bedding, our three year old son Douglas and his toys. Summer vacation 1947.

Many a tale I had listened to over the years about the Big House, Little House and several cottages named for Aunts and Uncles.

We stayed in the Little House and members of the family and their off-springs occupied the other cottages. Weather permitting, once a week mothers placed children in strollers and paraded along the side of the road to shop in the Village. It was a one mile hike to the stores for supplies and one mile back with loaded strollers.

Now I think of the summer spent in the Little House and the wet weather that kept us indoors much of the time. Thunderstorms, pitch-black starless nights. Windows rattled, lights flickered and the roof leaked. The sound of gushing water sent us scampering for receptacles to catch the dripping water. We used buckets, bowls, bottles and even the roaster and dishpan. They soon overflowed. The porch flooded and mud was tracked throughout the cottage. For days we mopped the mess from the time-worn linoleum. Dampness and musty odor was present the rest of that summer in the Little House.

There was no privacy. Every word could be heard as the partitions stood open at least a foot from the ceiling. At night we whispered.

Cooking for me was a real chore. Being unfamiliar with kerosene stoves I had to rely on others for help.

In spite of inconveniences we were drawn back to Walled Lake for several years by a Little House which was like a powerful magnet.

The Walled Lake togetherness of the family began in 1917. In that year the Big House and a garage was purchased by Uncle Sam, Uncle Nahtzie and Uncle Paul. It was on the Lake front. Downstairs were two large living-dining rooms, two large kitchens (one on each side of the house) and in the center a small kitchen and dining room. Upstairs were four small bedrooms on each end four large bedrooms in the center. The front porch was screened and covered the length of the house.

In 1919 Uncle Sigmund bought a cottage east of the Big House, approximately thirty feet away. It was a two story building with four large bedrooms, a large kitchen and a combination living-dining room.

A few years later Uncle Louis purchased a cottage up the road in the Bentley Subdivision. Uncle Anton also purchased a cottage in Bentley Subdivision and came with his family Aunt Theresa, and children Irene, Morty and Edna. The other families were: Uncle Sigmund, Aunt Fannie, Rose, Fred, Harry, Eddie and Andrew. Uncle Joe, Aunt Betty, Frank and Julius. Uncle Sam, Aunt Rose, Margaret, Alice, Jules and Frank. Uncle Nahtzie and Aunt Ethel. Aunt Louise, Hattie, Willie and Walter. Uncle Louis, Aunt Selma, Richard and George. Uncle Ignatz, Aunt Hermina, Lillie, Eleanor and Elizabeth. Aunt Kate and Uncle Paul.

When Uncle Joe and Aunt Betty came from Europe (1922) the garage was converted into the so-called Little House which Uncle Ignatz and family occupied while Aunt Betty and Uncle Joe and family lived in the Big House.

The day school closed for summer vacation Walter and Willie walked to the corner barbershop on Hastings and Kirby and said to the barber "take it off" and everyone laughed. The Barber clipped their hair and soon they were bald and ready for Walled Lake. A few days later a big truck from Uncle Nahtzie's store would make the rounds to each family household to pick up bedding, utensils and

clothing to take to the cottages. The next day Uncle Nahtzie and Aunt Ethel took Willie, Walter and Hattie to Walled Lake. On weekends he brought their mother Louise and grandfather Moses Gunsberg.

The following events are remembered by Willie:

My first recollection of Walled Lake was 1919. There was a party going on among the elders, a World War I homecoming. I was five years old. Colorful Japanese lanterns were strung across the backyard and there were kegs of beer on the back porch. Uncle Paul said in Hungarian to my mother "Please tell Willie not to fool around with the beer." Mother took me by the hand and said the beer was not for me, just older folks and to go on the front porch and play with the children.

Teams of horses were driven into the water before the wall was up and we watched as men dumped gravel into the water one load after another.

Any day my grandfather was at the cottage he would say to me in Hungarian "It's time." Then I would run to each household and repeat in Hungarian "It's time" and the men would come from each cottage, walking slowly to the Big House for afternoon prayers which were held in the big living-dining room. One of the Uncles or one of the cousins led the services.

On Friday nights all the boys went to Aunt Fannie's cottage and Uncle Sigmund would lead the services.

When I was eleven years old I rowed Aunt Hermina to the Village in the big row boat. When I arrived home tired I told my mother that Aunt Hermina was nice and I liked her but she was too heavy to row. My mother laughed and said "Don't say that to anyone."

My cousin Irene always wanted to play school. Each time she wanted to be the teacher. I was a few years older than her but had to be the student.

Every day we went swimming. I wore a one piece overall and got my first bathing suit when I was twelve. We would dive from a Big Rock that was in the water. There was a dock in front of the Big House and the water was just a foot and a half deep at the end of it. I would run down and dive in and never scraped

bottom. When I teased cousin Frank that he couldn't do it he tried and came up all scratched.

Often, we children gathered around Alex, a hermit, who lived in the woods and sitting on the Big Rock located near the water (in front of Aunt Fannie's cottage) he told stories of the days when there were Indians at Walled Lake.

Uncle Ignatz and Uncle Nahtzie would go fishing or pitch horseshoes. Once I went with them fishing and Uncle Ignatz said "I can't fish with Willie in the boat. He moves too much."

There was one well at first by the Woods. Then a second well across from the Rosenberg's cottage. We walked to the well for water. Later (about 1925) they sunk a 120 foot well in the backyard by the Big House. At the same time they installed a 500 gallon tank in Julius and Frank's bedroom and a pump on the well.

Every household had a young girl to clean but the cooking was done by the Aunts. I would eat at one of my Aunts when my Mother was not with me. I relished Aunt Kate's delicious roast beef roasted potatoes and especially her lemon meringue pie and strawberry shortcake. Aunt Hermina made a divine chocolate cake, Aunt Betty spicy goulash and Aunt Fannie's chicken with dumplings are still in my memory.

Andrew, Morty and I had a club. Our meetings were held by the Willow trees. We put money in a can which we buried. When we had enough money we would walk to the Village and treat ourselves to banana splits.

One day Mort, Andrew and I walked over to the Buffmyer Farm. WE had a wrestling match with Eddie Buffmyer in the haystack. A thistle went up my nose. I had a nosebleed so we went home.

There was a big tree by the water's edge with a branch that hung out over the water. Lillie and I would grab a branch and swing out over the water and back. We thought that was great.

Harry was a Boy Scout. He used to go to the Point at the end of the Bay. He would show us his scouting ability. We would bring potatoes and he made the

fire and threw the potatoes in. Then we covered them with sand. When he thought the potatoes were done we would dig them out, brush off the dirt and eat the dirty potatoes. WE thought this was wonderful.

Rose played the pump organ. We cousins stood outside and listened to the music.

A bunch of us would go to Seneca Shores to the old dance hall to roller skate. Cousin Edna and I did fancy skating.

A number of cousins went to the Village the day Julius played the slot machine. He won the jackpot and treated us all to banana splits.

Jules was teaching Eddie to drive. It was a touring car. Eddie ran into a ditch. Little Frank and I were in the back seat. AS it started to go over I grabbed the side of the car and leaped out. The rest stood in the water of the ditch.

On the corner of the eaves of the Little House was a Hornet's nest. Big Frank and Harry were painting the cottage. Harry took a broom to clean before painting and used it to knock down the Hornet's nest. The hornets swarmed all over him. He was taken to the doctor to pull out the stingers. For days his face was swollen like a balloon and his eyes were little slits.

Dorie Krause was about nineteen when he took Morty, Irene and a few other cousins and I for a ride in Uncle Anton's Cadillac touring car on gravel Thirteen Mile Road. On the top of a hillside the car conked out. Dorie walked to a farmhouse and called a garage. A man came out and found a small condenser wire burned out. We replaced the wire and we drove back to the cottage.

Very early in the morning Lilly and Eleanor would be frolicking in the water. I could hear them laughing.

Prior to 1925 we knew it was nine at night for the lights would start dimming. Then Aunt Kate would light the beautiful kerosene lamps with the multi-colored shades that were on the large table in the living room.

Electricity came from Northville and at 9 P.M. they shut off the power.

Hattie, Margaret and Alice brought home beautiful flowers from the cemetery. When Aunt Rose heard where they were from she threw them on the ground and trampled them. Then she took a shovel, scooped them up and buried them in the vacant lot next door.

Next door lived the Rosenberg family. One time they drove in and kept washing and washing their car. They had driven over a skunk on the way and the smell was awful.

Mrs. Graves from Milford spent summers in a beautiful stone cottage towards the woods. Her son Paul had a motorboat and we cousins lined up on the dock and he gave us each a ride. What a thrill!

Little Frank was the family athlete. He won at sidewalk tennis and was best baseball player. Everyone wanted him on their team.

Uncle Nahtzie had the first radio. Every Saturday Harry and I listened to the football game until Grandpa learned batteries were electricity and wouldn't allow the radio on because it was the Sabbath.

One day I remember going into the Big House and everyone said to me shh, shh be quiet. Aunt Selma is putting George to sleep.

Richard, Walter, Eddie and I played touch football on Aunt Theresa's lawn.

One day we cousins played Hide and Seek. I hid in the ice house. They never found me and when I did come out I was soaking wet and covered with straw. I cried and Aunt Kate said "It's nothing to cry about. Go in the Lake and clean off."

US cousins played baseball on Aunt Theresa's lawn. They always put me in the outer outfield which was the road. Whenever a ball came my way they yelled "get him a bushel basket."

Morty, Little Frank, Andrew and I played a game with Hungarian cards.

It was my job to transfer (very carefully) the kerosene from the metal can to glass bowls for the kerosene stove.

Farmers came with horse-drawn wagons once a week to sell fruits and vegetables.

On rainy days the boys played marbles indoors and the girls played jacks or did needlework.

Andrew and I walked to a dirt road on Seneca Shores to an orchard. We picked three or four apples and ate them. One day when we got back to the cottages Aunt Fannie called us over and said that a woman had come complaining about you two boys, that you were taking apples from her orchard. Then Aunt Fannie said that the woman needed the apples to make a living and we were not to take any more. We never did.

I recall terrible storm when Uncle Sam set a pail on the porch. When the storm was over he sprinkled water from the pail to the left, to the right and in front of him. Then he said a prayer.

After graduation from High School in 1931 I spent two weeks of summer at Walled Lake until 1934 and then there were no more vacations at Walled Lake until after Jules bought the cottages.

In 1946, 1947, 1948 I went with my wife Phyllis son Douglas, sister Hattie, Her husband Saul Grand and their son Michael and my mother now Little Grandma, named by Douglas and all stayed in the Little House.