

The Story of Wooters and 'Mirimichi' which means Happy Retreat

Jim Wooters, born in Omaha, NE in 1920 first met Mary Elizabeth Hagan, born in Des Moines, IA in 1921 at a winter Pine Haven Beach gathering held near the Des Moines airport in 1937. Jim, a graduate of North High in Des Moines had been introduced to Mary by a mutual friend as Mary was attending East High School in Des Moines.

Jim Wooters' parents, Leland and Hope Wooters first bought property on Pine Haven Beach in 1925. Years prior to this, they had stayed in the Lilly cabin just north of the former Hawkeye Haven. The Lilly family was from Des Moines and operated a local funeral home. They met through the DM Register and Tribune where Leland Wooters was an account executive. The Wooters family purchased land, cabin and boat for \$3,500. This original cabin was near the South end of Lakeshore Drive.

Mary Elizabeth Hagan's grandparents were James and Anna Edworthy of Des Moines. They purchased land and cabin on Chippewa Lane in 1925. Mrs. Edworthy often contributed articles to local papers and on July 17, 1925 wrote in part for the CAPITOL HILL of East Des Moines, 'Most all of the lots along Pine Haven Beach are sold and several of the back ones, mostly to Des Moines people. About thirty-five cottages have been built and more are in course of construction. Some of the Des Moines people here now are Mr. and Mrs. W.J. Pilkington, Mr. and Mrs. W.F. Ghormley, Dr. and Mrs. Harry Holmes, Mr. and Mrs. Burnett, Mr. Griswold, Mr. Winegarten and son.' The Edworthy cabin has always been referred to as 'The Bluebird'. It is still owned by heirs of Mary's sisters. Mary's father, Irwin Hagan was a mail carrier for many years on Des Moines' west side.

Jim and Mary were married in 1941 and built their own cabin in the early 60's. The land was located north of Jim's parents and began as a screened porch with additional sleeping available in their Silver Streak trailer at the top of the hill. A more modern cabin (with indoor plumbing!) was completed a few years later.

In 1970, Jim and Mary purchased a parcel of land on the East side of Long Lake known as Camp Braemar. It was run as a boys summer camp but was annually visited by musicians from the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra that would gather and play for lake residents. Jim and Mary remember as teenagers, rowing across the lake to listen to the orchestra perform on the beach. The entire camp encompassed 40 acres with a small lake that was perfect for canoeing campers!

The Wooters renamed the camp 'Mirimichi' which means Happy Retreat. It is currently enjoyed by their children, grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren. This represents a total of 6 generations being raised on the shores of Long Lake!

At 96 years old, Jim still enjoys visiting his 'Happy Retreat'. Mary is unable to make the trip from Des Moines to the lake but memories of Pine Haven Beach and Mirimichi still put a smile on her face. This young at heart couple recently celebrated their 75th wedding anniversary!