

Kama Tower Experience

by ANNE TODESCO

As we come into the fire hazard season it brings back memories of the fire towers and the people who manned them. These towers are no more, just plane patrol everyday over this area. There were towers at Schreiber Cook's Lake, at Kama Hill and I believe near Killala Lake.

We have a retired fire tower operator in our village by the name of Mrs. Josephine Gerow Hubelit. She is a small, active and perky lady and it never worried her to live alone at the Fire Tower bases. She enjoyed the views, sighting various animals and birds. She did a lot of craftwork in tower or cabin and read several books by coal oil or gas lamps.

Josephine took over the Schreiber tower in 1965 a month after the passing of her first husband Dan Gerow. This tower was situated eight miles north of Schreiber. It was a very rugged and rocky place and trail which made getting to and from the site very difficult, so she had to stay put. That season she was there five months as a lookout for forest fires.

Her only contact with the outside was by radio to other towers and the home base at Pays Plat. She had to be at her post not later than 9:30 a.m. to receive the weather reports from four other towers and relay the whole works along with her report to the home base.

She found the days very long at first and hot sitting in the cupola at the top of the fire tower. On windy days, the tower would sway so bad that when she got down to ground level that evening, she would be rocky and dizzy for quite awhile after reaching the ground and her cabin. Laughing she said that a fire tower was no place to get

drunk on a windy day.

She had one very big existing problem at the Schreiber tower and that was the water supply. The well dried up that hot summer so she dug another well herself and was rewarded with good water but four young mink that decided to go for a swim in the nice cool water, drowned during the night and that finished poor Josephine's fresh water supply. Finally she resorted to catching rain water in pots and pans, then she boiled and bottled it. After one heavy rainfall of 2 3/4 inches of rain she gathered quite a supply of water and said that she was so happy to have caught such a good supply of water. She covered the pail and put it under the cabin to keep cool till morning, then she would boil and bottle it. She figured that she had enough to last at least a week or more but she was very disillusioned that morning as some mice managed to get into the pail and drowned. Josephine said that she cried all day and finally decided to call the home base and told them to send some men up to help her pack and get out and said she was quitting the job or else they saw to it that fresh water would be dropped weekly by parachute to her. The base men got busy and saw to it that she had plenty of fresh water thereafter. It was flown all the way from Geraldton. Some tins landed in the cabin clearing but it took her three days and her dog to find one of the cans that landed in dense bush.

It was interesting to speak with Josephine about her experiences on the towers. One would have to write a book to cover all her stories. One night about eleven o'clock a blood curdling cry filled the air. It was a big lynx that

was prowling about. Its footprints were very large. A bear decided to hang about her post. After shooting off a few rounds from her 22 rifle, she never saw them again. Another visitor that hung around the most of the summer was a cow moose and calf but they were no trouble. One morning they decided to stand right under the tower and she couldn't climb up to the cupola till an hour or so later. Josephine was late getting in her reports that morning. Deer were plentiful in the area of Schreiber tower. She claimed that she would have gone insane that summer if she hadn't to look forward to her daughter's weekly visits. The tower was 80 feet high.

The following years Josephine took over the Kama Fire Tower high on a hill about 35 miles east of Nipigon. She reported this location a very attractive place situated in a clearing about three times as large as the Schreiber base. Here she reported a good supply of blueberries and wild strawberries. Her jam cupboard was well supplied from this berry picking place. Here she planted a few flowers about the cabin but her vegetable garden was gobbled up by the rabbits as soon as the plants started to grow. She had to dig in and clean up her cabin as it was quite a mess. It appeared as if hunters and people up that way just moved in during the fall and winter. Her family arrived with mop and brushes and soon had the place in top order. The boys cut enough wood to last a couple years but she split and piled it near the cabin.

Josephine was very fortunate to have a good water well supplied from an underground spring. Although it was located a few yards back in the bush, she carried it out

in pails hooked on to a wooden shoulder yoke. This was always a cool clear water supply. That was her evening chore as soon as she came down from the tower, but she still put out pails to catch rainwater for the laundry and bathing.

Again there were many wild animals. One foggy morning when approaching the tower she almost stepped on a couple grounded mallard ducks. A mother partridge and her brood hung around the clearing. She fed them and finally were gathered together by the hen to return to the bush. She had to keep her dog Kipper locked indoors for fear he would destroy the chicks. The dog would exercise herself by chasing rabbits all over the clearing.

One night old Mr. Bruno Bear came along and deliberately tore up the sink line — about forty feet of it and then started on the screen door, again Josephine got out her small gun and fired a few shots into the air after he backed away from the cabin. He disappeared into the bush and wasn't seen again. She had many small pets among the smaller animals. She had eleven trained chipmunks who did acrobatics along the clothes line but two young squirrels made sure that they didn't outshine them in their tricks to eat all the peanuts and oatmeal she fed them. A large porcupine took up residence under the cabin. This necessitated the dog had to be kept indoors or he would likely obtain a snout full of quills. Finally porky left his temporary home and Josephine destroyed him. After pulling out the larger quills and skinning the animal, she cooked it for fresh meat. Although she wasn't too keen on its flavour she ate some of it but the

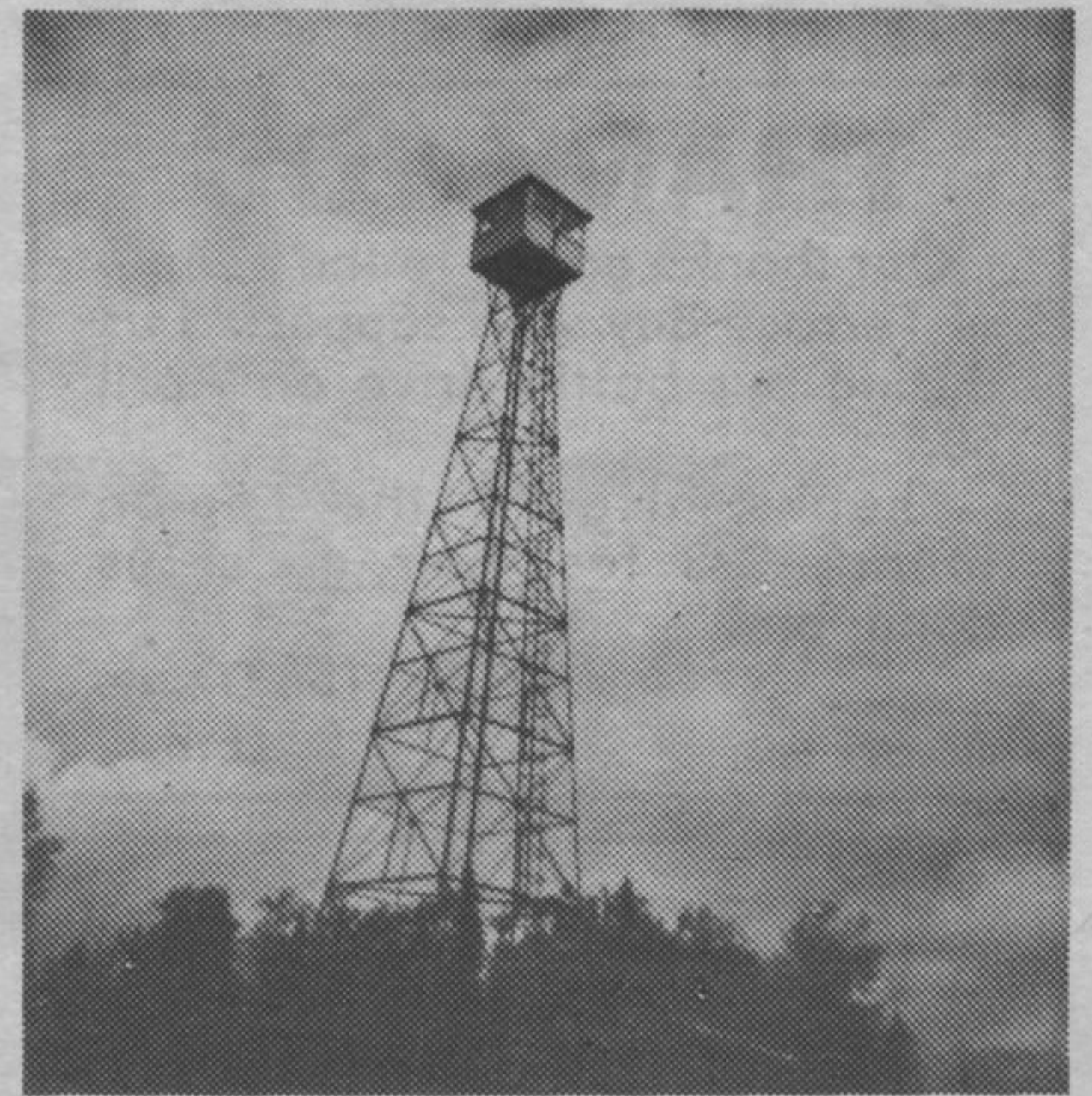
dog ate the larger portion of it and really enjoyed the fresh meat.

One summer the dog Kipper started acting odd and whining for about four days and wouldn't leave the house and her hair was everlastingly standing on end. She wouldn't even go for a walk along the trail with Josie so she took off alone but about 25 feet from the cabin she came upon a large timber wolf's tracks in a muddy spot. She hurried back to the cabin and out came her gun and she fired a few shots into the air to frighten it away, there appeared to be no more evidence of its return, and Kipper the dog settled down to his normal activity of chasing rabbits.

One day on her way to the tower she came face to face with a bear. They stared at each other but neither moved till the bear stood on his hind legs. Then Josephine became mobile and sidled away into the bush and kept her eyes on the animal, then she made tracks to the tower while Mr. Bear kept on down the trail. After that frightening episode, she always carried a pop can with a few stones in it and rattled it all the time. That manouever gave her more confidence while tramping the trail to and from the fire tower. It is supposed that wild animals won't disturb anyone making a noise. She enjoyed her life manning the fire towers with its peaceful quietness as well as its nerving experience and would gladly do it over again but there are no more towers. They and cabins are all demolished but Josephine still likes the outdoor life and operated a trapline for some years, setting and lifting her traps, skinning and stretching the belts. My next story will be on her experiences trapping.



Schreiber tower man's cottage.



Kama Tower

Lake Superior
Board of Education



PUBLIC NOTICE

Next regular meeting of Lake Superior Board of Education, will be held on Monday, May 16, 1983 at 7:00 p.m. in the Manitowadge Public School Gymnasium.

M. Reid,
Chairman

M. Twomey,
Director

Flea Market

There will be an indoor Gigantic Flea Market on Saturday, May 14th, at the Terrace Bay Arena. To date, 11 different selling areas have been reserved. Set up time is from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon. Doors open to the public at 1:00 p.m.

In order to allow "you" the opportunity to participate in this event, we have extended the deadline to Thursday, May 12th, to reserve your space, table or truck of items. All spaces must be paid by this date. Truck space is available as well as table space.

The Flea Market will allow the opportunity to trade or sell items that are of no use to you anymore. You set the price! The Flea Market is held in conjunction with clean-up week, so clean your basement, garage or attic and participate!

Arthritis can be controlled.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
CONTACT YOUR
ARTHRITIS SOCIETY.

THE
ARTHRITIS
SOCIETY



DO YOU HAVE ANY PROBLEMS IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS?

1. Picture taking techniques
2. Camera equipment
3. Photo finishing

If you answered yes to anyone of the above, come into **Schreiber Foodmarket** on **Saturday, May 14th** between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. and see our Professional "in store" Demonstration by **BRUCE KELSEY**.

All day Saturday, any roll of film brought in for developing will only be charged **1/2 price**.

For everyone who comes in to see Bruce with any camera problems will be eligible to enter a draw for a Kodak Disc Camera (value approximately \$95.00)

All Prismatic customers from Terrace Bay and Schreiber welcomed.