



Rear-view Mirror

Cedar Beach Pavilion Turns 80

By Maurice Smith

How many of us growing up in areas around Toronto spent at least one day each summer up at that park on Musselman's Lake? How many climbed aboard a school bus, or sat in the back seat of the family vehicle to make the journey to the place known as Cedar Beach?

For many families who had built there, some prior to 1930, the area around the lake was cottage country. Mothers and children would spend the summer at the lake with father coming up for the weekend. For others this was the summer weekend retreat to which they travelled to get away from the weekday grind and heat of Toronto.

George Davies was born in England in 1886 and came to Canada as a child. While he was working as a carpenter in Toronto, he and his wife purchased a hundred-acre farm on the north side of the lake where, in 1929, he built a pavilion overlooking the eastern shoreline. With a family philosophy of "We only have to do one thing, but we have to do it better than anyone else," he was confident his pavilion and dancehall would attract patrons from far and wide. How right he was!

I wonder if he ever imagined that what he built that summer would become the focal point of a very large recreational business: that his pavilion and waterfront park would eventually be surrounded by permanent residential homes, mobile summer dwellings, celebrate its 80th anniversary and be operated by four successive generations of his family.

During the 1930s and 1940s the pavilion became the place to play and dance in the area. Most nights of the week you could dance to music provided by the big bands of Bobby Gimby, Jack Crawford or Bert Niosi. If you could not make it to the lake on a Saturday night, you could tune into a Toronto radio station broadcasting live from the pavilion.

Shortly after the big band era ended, country and western music was introduced and the pavilion came alive once again. During the 1960s, an overflowing crowd of 400 patrons squeezed in every weekend to listen and dance to the music.

According to many locals, the relatively small lake was, at one time, way over-populated with visitors. Their quiet summer retreat became crowded with water-skiers and boat enthusiasts from surrounding areas. It was not uncommon to see as many as six or seven people water-skiing or racing boats, while others were trying to fish or swim. You could also board a tour boat, if you had 25 cents, for an excursion around the lake. I was told that one year, the famous hydroplane powerboat, Miss Supertest, underwent her spring tune-up there.

Despite many other distractions in the area such as the residents who were members of the infamous, bank-robbing, Boyd Gang (true), motorcycle biker problems (exaggerated), unruly crowds of teenagers (greatly exaggerated), or thousands of people attending the annual Miss Cedar Beach contest (true), the pavilion continued to survive.

Although still owned by the Davies family, it is now leased to Dianne and Dave Palachik, who continue to operate the restaurant and snack bar and now also host poker and dart tournaments. And they have started once again to have dances on the original sprung-hardwood floor.

Who would have thought a building constructed in 1929 at the end of what was then a dirt lane, now a paved well-travelled roadway, would still be sitting majestically at the top of the hill guarding the east end of the lake?

So happy 80th anniversary to the Cedar Beach pavilion: you have endured. Hope you continue to be the place to play for many years to come.

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