

Chapter 2

Heaven at a Lake



I was walking down the road toward the camp entrance when right before my very eyes appeared an angel! Yes, you read that right. It was an angel in the form of a teenage boy, and he was walking up the road toward me with a human boy and two lowly earth girls. Wait, I'm getting ahead of myself.

Let me tell you about the best thing to come out of my mom's marriage to her second husband. It was camping at Bass Lake, California, because it was there that I would discover my destiny.

Bass Lake was created in 1910 by PG&E as a hydroelectric power source. It is about a half hour south of Yosemite Park in the Sierra National Forest.

As a PG&E employee, my stepfather had camping privileges at the Wishon Cove campground (owned by the company) at Bass Lake. He took a week-long vacation there every year, so when he and my mom married, we started going there, too.

My family first camped at Bass Lake in the summer of 1975 when I was twelve years old. I fell in love with the forest, the lake, the campground, the squirrels and birds, the sunshine, the fresh smell of pine trees—the ambiance of it all. I loved everything about it. For me, this was the closest to heaven I would ever get. From the first day I arrived there, I knew without a doubt that the mountains were where I wanted to live for the rest of my life.

The campground featured cabins and camping spaces for tents and RVs. We always camped in the section for tents and RVs. The campsites were scattered, mostly on a small hillside, and unpaved. Every site had a shed with an open window on each side, one or two open windows in the back, and a garage door on the front. The garage door could be lowered to completely close up the shed. Underneath each shed was a cement foundation that extended about ten feet in front of the structure. On this patio, there was a picnic table, a stone barbecue, and a water spigot.

The sheds contained old cots with springs, which were meant to hold mattresses. We would drag the cots out and set them up near the campsite. Then we put cardboard on top of the springs, and our sleeping bags on top of the cardboard.



We slept out under the stars. Even though it was the most uncomfortable bed I had ever slept in, I loved it. I loved laying out there at night and spending hours looking at the stars, thinking (mostly about boys), praying, and contemplating the universe.

There were two bathrooms, one for men and one for women. Each bathroom had two toilets, two sinks with mirrors above them, and two showers.

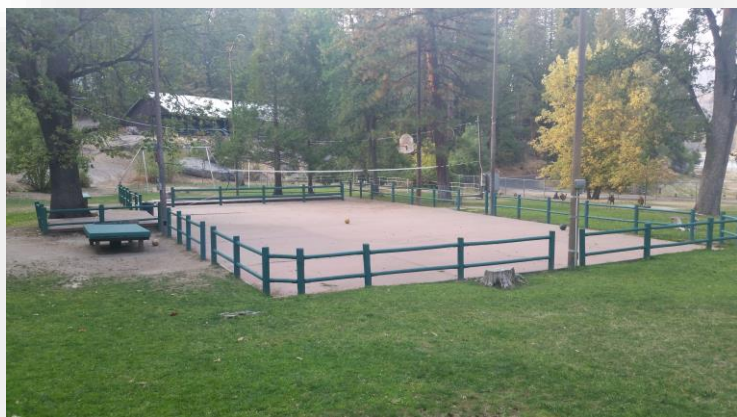


Men's bathroom in foreground. Women's in the background.

The campgrounds had a recreational building with a jukebox, pool tables, pinball machines, and a snack bar. (I bought hundreds of Big Hunk candy bars there.) Also at the snack bar, campers could borrow sports equipment to use at the camp's various recreation areas. There was a huge badminton/volleyball court, two cement ping-pong tables, two shuffle alleys, the largest swing set you ever saw, monkey bars, and a merry-go-round.



Recreation building



The recreation area: Volleyball court, ping-pong table on the left, swing set in the back

Todd's Uncle Grant was one of seven vice presidents for PG&E. One of the perks of his position was the use of the company cabin at the Wishon Cove campground. It was no ordinary cabin. It was more like a house. The exterior had well-maintained wood siding that was painted brown. The inside was very spacious. It had at least five bedrooms and two or three bathrooms. There was a large front porch that spread the entire length of the house. Part of it had a wood railing around it with a built-in seat bench. From the porch, you could see through the pine trees and down to the water. There was a basement with a pool table where Todd, his cousins, and his friends played pool during their many summer vacations there. It had a cement stairway that led down to the street below, and across the street was the lake (Wishon Cove). One of Todd's favorite memories of his Uncle Grant at the cabin was when he would make his famous beer-battered pancakes. Todd said his mouth watered just thinking about them. Yum!



Uncle Grant's cabin. The front windows overlook the water and the docks in Wishon Cove.

The cabin came with its own private dock. Next to it was another private dock for use by all of the other people who camped in Wishon Cove. It was painted green and had built-in seat benches with back railings so no one would fall into the water. It was built on pillars cemented into the rock foundation at the bottom of the lake.



The main dock. The smaller floating dock in the foreground is usually on the opposite side, and it would have been covered with green AstroTurf

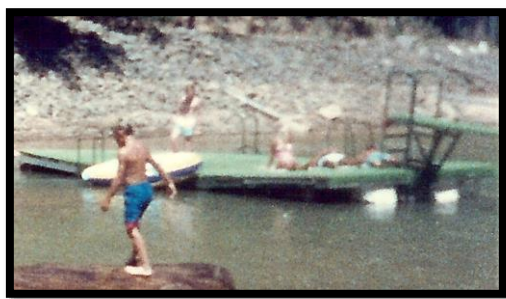
Around the corner from the cabin was a small country store named McDougal's. (Now it is called Miller's Landing.) They sold ice cream there. Our vacation wouldn't be complete unless we walked to McDougal's at least once during the week—or once a day, if we could talk our parents into giving us the money—to buy an ice-cream cone. It was always a treat.



This is pretty much what McDougal's looked like when we started going there. When Miller's Landing bought it, it was turned into a resort where we love to vacation.

Bass Lake was a reservoir; the water was slowly drained out of it all year long. If there had been a good winter—full of snow and rain—by June, the water level would rise all the way up to the road surrounding the lake. And it would stay relatively high all summer. A bad winter—with little snow and rain—would leave the water level low. Depending upon the lake level during the summer season, the water could be so high that it reached to the top of the dock, or so low that one could actually walk on the ground underneath it. One year, it was so low that we actually hung out on the ground under the dock. It was a huge bummer. More water meant more fun. Less water meant less fun. That was the bottom line.

A ladder on the stationary dock led down to a smaller dock floating on the water. From that dock, you could swim to a larger floating dock in the middle of the cove. It was surrounded by water, and the only way to get to it was to swim. It was covered with green AstroTurf. Many people would swim out to it holding rolled-up towels and suntan lotion in one hand above the water. Usually there would be one person who swam a transistor radio out there, too. The music set the ambiance for a day of perfect summer fun at the lake.



This is the dock that floated in the middle of the cove. The water level was very low when this picture was taken in 1987.

Near the dock floated a waterlogged tree trunk, which was at least twelve feet long and four feet in diameter with all kinds of protrusions and crevices in it. It had been in the cove for years. We would swim out to it, climb on top while it rolled back and forth, and try to stay there until we were completely dried from the sun. We had to do all of this while anywhere from two to ten other kids tried to do the same. We walked back and forth non-stop while trying to avoid stepping on all of the other kids. Many times the rocking motion, from kids in the water trying to pull themselves up on it, would build up enough momentum that it would make a complete roll all the way around, and often multiple rolls once it got going. If you could remain on top of the log after that, you were considered a master roller. Todd and I became master rollers. Heehee.

I remember trying to climb on many times and holding tight as it made a complete roll. I would roll with the log all the way underwater and back up again. It was a thrill. Many of us became so skilled at this that we could walk on it for hours at a time. We would get so hot and bored that we'd finally jump off into the cool water. It felt exhilarating. I can almost feel it as I'm writing about it; Ah, the feeling of jumping off into the cool water and coming out with the warm sun shining on my face and the smell of fresh water and mountain air. There was nothing better than that.

One year, some people from across the lake drove over in a boat in the middle of the night, stole the log, and brought it to their cove. So some people from our cove went and stole it back. Then, one year, it

disappeared for good. It was replaced with another log, but the new one wasn't as good.

I had spent several summers walking the old log, and I could have walked it in my sleep. I had memorized every protrusion and crevice and knew exactly where to place my hands and feet for the best leverage as I climbed to the top.

The new log had very few spots to grasp. So that was it. The fun was over. Time to move on to the teenage game of finding a boyfriend for the week.

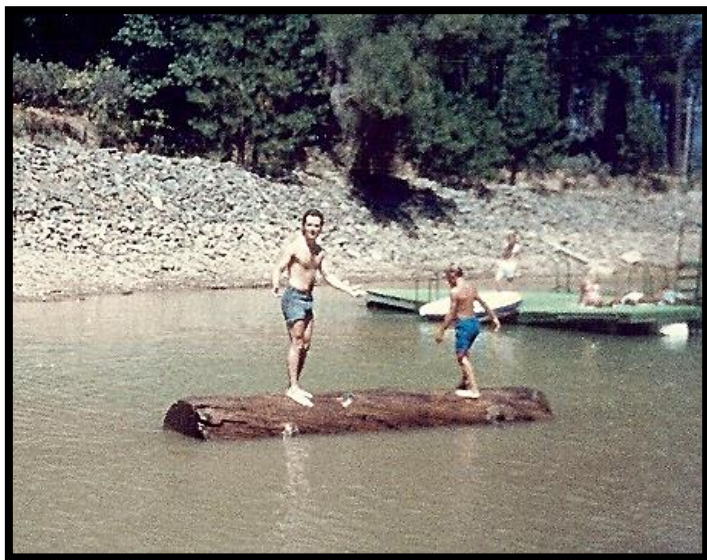


In background is the original log. Notice how many kids are trying to climb onto it.

When we reached our early teens, we spent more time lying in the sun on the dock and getting to know the other guys and girls who were there. When I say “getting to know,” what I really mean is getting to know the person you found attractive. If the feelings were mutual, the two teens would become a couple and would be exclusive for the whole week. We called it a “summer fling thing.” Heehee At the end of the day, everyone would return to the camps, eat dinner, and then go down to the recreation area for the evening. By dark, the volleyball court would be brightly lit with streetlights. There was always a volleyball game in progress. It was good, clean, old-

fashioned fun. This was the place where sweethearts met and others sparked new flames.

My stepsister, who was four years older than me, showed me how to get ready for the evening festivities the first year we went to Bass Lake together. She taught me the nightly ritual: After dinner, all the



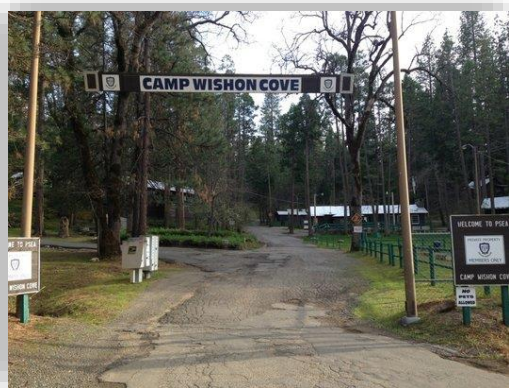
This is not the old log. It is the one brought in after the old log disappeared. This picture was taken in 1987, when the water level was very low.

girls would take showers, put on makeup, and do their hair to look their best when they went down to the recreation area.

And we shaved our legs every single day we were there. God forbid one stub of leg hair showed and anyone saw it. We wouldn't be known as the cute girls with nice tans; we would be known as the girls who looked like werewolves. Heehee.

All of these descriptive details are important to remember when you read about my date with destiny. ...

Love at First Sight and a Gravitational Pull of the Universe



Entrance to Wishon Cove Campground

It was the summer of 1979, mid-July to be exact. I was sixteen and had my driver's license for about a month. Todd was fifteen-and-a-half and only had his permit because he wouldn't turn sixteen until July 27.

Few of my family members came with us to the lake that year. It was only my mom, stepfather, younger stepbrother, and me. It felt weird to have so few of us going. We usually had anywhere from six to twelve people in our camp alone. Then there were other families that also worked at PG&E, more people from their boating club, and two of my mom's brothers and their families, so it was usually one big party all week long. Even so, I wouldn't have missed it for anything; it was the highlight of my year.

Todd came up with his mom and his brother, Mark. They stayed with his Uncle Grant, Aunt Joan, and their son, Tom, along with his grandparents at the company cabin. Tom was staying at the lake all summer. For the past few years, he had a job helping the host caretakers run the camp. I had met him a year or two before.

We pulled in at around one o'clock in the afternoon. Before we could go play, we would first set up camp. We stored the food and kitchen supplies in the shed, draped a plastic table cloth on the picnic table, and placed a plastic tub with dish soap for washing on the side

of the stone barbecue pit. We took the camper off the truck, leveled it, and I set up my bed near our campsite. My stepbrother was only about eight years old at the time, so he slept in the camper with my parents.

After setting up camp, my mom, stepfather, and stepbrother took the boat to launch and parked it in the boat slip they had reserved for the week. I headed down to the cove to check out the docks and see who was there.

I was walking down the road toward the camp entrance when right before my very eyes appeared an angel! Yes, you read that right. It was an angel in the form of a teenage boy, and he was walking up the road toward me with a human boy and two lowly earth girls.

I couldn't take my eyes off him. Everyone and everything else faded away. I was stunned at how good-looking he was, so stunned that everything started moving in slow motion.

You know how you'll see a scene in a movie and it starts playing in slow motion? It was just like that. I'll say it again: I couldn't take my eyes off him. It was like the heavens opened and rays of luminous light beamed down all around him. He had a brilliant aura that was pulling me toward him like a magnet. There was no fighting it, and I didn't want to fight it. I gave into it,....

To continue reading this inspiring love story, please order the book, "I'll Meet You at the Dock," by going to the [STORE](#) on this website. And remember to celebrate love, always!