

LOOKING BACK

A TALE OF TWO LAKE FAMILIES

by Jan Thomas Van Sickle



This is the story of one of the many couples whose families had summered in Hague for decades and who met, ultimately fell in love, and married here at the lake, hence joining their two families in a happy, lifelong bond.

First, we meet the Halliday family. Herbert and Vernie Halliday first arrived in Silver Bay when Herbert (a YMCA General Secretary at the Fitchburg, MA, YMCA) attended Y conferences there in 1938, along with Vernie and their three sons Jim, Ted, and Gene. The next summer, the family went back to Silver Bay for a six-week stay at the Woodside Cottage. Over the years, Vernie had a number of jobs including serving as a hostess in the dining room, manning the gift shop, being the housemother at Paine for staff, and, lastly, working in the craft shop.

Ted, born in 1923, met Shirley Raynor of the same age, at Silver Bay in 1940. Shirley's family was from Rockville Center, NY, and a friend of her mom's, who was a hostess in the Silver Bay dining room, recommended they summer at Silver Bay. During those years before Pearl Harbor, Ted and his two brothers and Shirley and her brother, Artie, all worked as EMPS at Silver Bay.

In August 1944, Ted was on furlough from the Army before going to fight in Europe and he and Shirley were married on Long Island. Ted and Shirley began staying in a Silver Bay campus cottage for a couple of weeks each summer, introducing their three children, Robin, Leslie, and Chris, to the joys of vacationing at Lake George.

Meanwhile, the Rev. Lee Roy Van Sickle and his wife, Nellie, discovered Silver Bay and, during the summer of 1953, rented a little cottage at the top of Watt's Hill. Lee was a veteran of WWII and the Korean War. That first summer, Lee learned that Keith DeLarm, who had just returned from Korea, was struggling to put his milk business back together and needed a delivery driver. So, Keith processed the milk and Lee volunteered to drive his truck while he was there on vacation.

In that same year, the Van Sickle's bought a lot on Cratty Point, inside Pudding Island. The next summer, Lee started building a cottage by digging piling footings by hand. When Keith discovered what Lee was doing, he showed up with his father's bulldozer and dug a basement for Lee at no charge.

And so, Lee built a cottage and Nellie and Lee Van Sickle became summer residents of Hague. Their three children – Camilla, Jan (Tom), and George, loved spending their summers at the lake. The children especially enjoyed walking over to Silver Bay via the "Friendship Trail" that still runs from the Parlin's home on Pudding Island Road, through the Rowan/Smith woods to the Silver Bay Road. It offered safe passage from their home to the Silver Bay campus without them having to walk on Route 9N.

The Silver Bay Craft Shop turned out to be where these two families first connected. Vernie Halliday worked at the shop for many years and Nellie Van Sickle, whose specialty was leaded glass, began to work there as well. Along the way, the children of Ted and Shirley and Lee and Nellie, Robin Halliday and Jan Van Sickle, met. They were introduced by Jeannette Babcock King, who invited both of them to the wedding of Pete Carney (grew up on Sabbath Day Point) and Peggy King (summer Hague resident). That is another love story, along with another summer romance between Jeannette and Tim King that connected the Silver Bay teenagers with the Hague and Northern Lake George Yacht Club kids.

That could have been the start of a great Lake George romance between Robin and Jan, but nothing came of it until a lucky 13 years later, when both needed changes in their lives. Behind the scenes were Vernie and Nellie at the craft shop doing some matchmaking. Robin and Jan reconnected, fell in love, and married on the tiny and picturesque nearby island we know as Scotch Bonnet.

So, after each family had been in the Silver Bay area for decades, the Hallidays and the Van Sickle's became joined together. The tradition of getting married in the area continued when Jan and Robin's second son, Matt, and his college sweetheart were married on Slim Point in Silver Bay and the wedding reception was in the old dining hall.

But, times change. The Van Sickle's have now sold their lake cottage. Lee and Nellie Van Sickle and Ted Halliday passed away in their 90's. Shirley, who turned 100 this year, still owns the

Halliday cottage on Terrace Road above Silver Bay. These days, the combined Halliday/Van Sickle family enjoys time together every summer on our favorite lake, the one the French called the Lac du St. Sacramento, and in the family home Ted named "Ultimate Folly."

Our lake cottage today is less like a folly and more like a home. ▣



TOP TO BOTTOM: Shirley and Ted Halliday, Lee and Nellie Van Sickle, Jan and Robin Van Sickle on their wedding days