

# ECHOES OF CEDARVILLE JUNE 2012

*Cedarville Area Historical Society*



## Suzy Beggin as Jane Addams June 19

Suzy Beggin, well-known for her portrayal of Cedarville's Jane Addams, will re-live the early village years of Miss Addams at a special June 19 evening performance at the Cedarville Museum.

Admission to the 7:30 p.m. program is \$2 for Cedarville Area Historical Society members and \$3 to the general public. A social hour will follow her talk.



*Suzy*

Miss Beggin, a graduate of Millikin University with a history degree, was executive director of the Stephenson County Historical Society for six years. Since

2004 she has been a volunteer at the Apple River Fort demonstrating open hearth cooking, spinning, knitting and sheep shearing. She demonstrates chicken butchering throughout the year and butchers a hog each January at the fort.

She also works one day a week at Fiber Wild!, a yarn shop in Galena. At home

she is a shepherdess, raising historic breeds of sheep using nineteenth century farming methods. She spends the fall selling her wool at historic events and museums. Her wool yarn is also available year-round at several yarn shops in the area.

### Be Sure to See

*Rick Noble's memory of his Grandpa Mike Fink. Pgs. 2—5.*

*Photos of Cedarville's Memorial Day parade and picnic Pgs. 6—7.*

### June Friday Free Films

June 1: "The North Avenue Irregulars" with Cloris Leachman, Barbara Harris  
June 8: "McLintock!" with John Wayne, Maureen O'Hara, Yvonne DeCarlo  
June 15: "Operation Petticoat" with Cary Grant, Tony Curtis, Joan O'Brien  
June 22: "Please Don't Eat the Daisies" with David Niven, Doris Day,  
June 29: "Forever Darling" with Lucille Ball, Desi Arnaz, James Mason

## Grandpa Fink Was Exceptional Man

*(In last month's newsletter, Rick Noble, former Cedarville resident now living in Wisconsin, paid tribute to his grandmother Alice Fink. This month Rick remembers her husband, Mike.)*

I woke up itching. I had instinctively hiked the Hudson Bay four point blanket up to my chin and was now sporting an angry red welt on my neck from a hypersensitivity to wool. Not that it mattered. I was on summer vacation in a rustic log cabin on Brule Island near the Boundary Waters in upper Minnesota and was surrounded by city-slicker professionals pretending to be outdoorsmen. They were nursing bites and bruises and sore muscles of their own and the sight of a ruby throated six-year-old was of no interest to anyone — especially the physicians among them who wished to remain on vacation.

Summer evenings on Brule Lake could be downright chilly and an Indian blanket tucked around your sleeping bag, together with a well stoked potbellied stove, was essential most nights. But that was the small price of admission to behold the morning sun burning off the mist, unveiling a dead calm lake mirroring a stunning, cobalt blue sky.

Grandma and Grandpa Fink ran a fishing camp for old Doc Dinges during the summers with Grandpa acting as camp manager/guide and Gram as cook and house-

keeper. The camp consisted of two cabins and a converted airplane hanger for guests and the main lodge that served as communal dining room, office, bar and manager's quarters. Across a path thick with pine needles sat the minnow shack, smoke house and, interestingly enough, the sauna. By the end of the week, the smell of the smoke house full of fish and the sauna full of fishermen short on soap was indistinguishable. There was cold running water, wood stoves in each cabin, electric lights and refrigeration for all the Karlsbrau cone top beer.



My grandpa, Myron Phillip (Mike) Fink, was a man of many interests who was torn between two worlds: the modern world of airplanes and radios and time-saving gadgets, and the primitive Northwoods world of canoes and loons and timeless beauty. Born and raised in Cedarville, he appreciated small town living, but regularly craved the sanctuary

and drama that only nature can provide. He understood animals, he could predict the weather and he was blessed with an innate sense of harmony with the environment. Grandpa taught my brother and me how to shoot a rifle, gut a fish, to use short, rapid pulls when you're starting a two-cycle engine and long ones on a four-cycle and how to detach a leech by applying a freshly extinguished match to its back. His teaching style accommodated the reality that while young boys were seldom listening, they were always watching. Had I known he was only going to be around for another decade, I would have paid more attention. But every summer up until the early 1960s, we kids were invited up to fish, boat, help out around the camp and to share Grandpa's love of the wilderness.

Getting to Brule was an adventure in itself. The interstate highway system was still a work in progress and the final few miles to the dock degenerated from gravel on the Gunflint Trail to packed earth logging roads to beaver swamps choked with tangles of brush and fallen pine trees. Once there, you parked in the quarry and took the barge, an 8 x 10 wooden platform perched on two WWII pontoons with a 35 horse Evinrude outboard strapped on back, to the island. Motor prohibitions would come later.

I was young and it was so long ago that I have difficulty separating what I actually remember from what was either told to me later or what I've seen in old photographs, but I can recall my brother and

me hauling garbage to the mainland in a cavernous aluminum motorboat like it was yesterday. The black bear cubs would flock to the garbage pit, eager for their next exotic delicacy, while their mothers hung back in the shadows. In this age of bicycle helmets, outlawed yard darts and warnings on hot coffee, it's hard to imagine a time when a loving relative would launch a six and seven-year-old out onto the open water with bags of bear bait between them — making what amounted to a boy sandwich ... in foil — with the obvious admonition, "And, be sure to watch out for the bears." Yet, somehow we managed to thrive.

Campers could bring their own groceries, but most joined Grandma and Grandpa at daybreak for breakfast in the lodge. There was no finer greeting to a day in the woods than waking up to the heavenly aroma of bacon frying and coffee brewing. It helped restore the veneer of civilization that had been peeled away by the previous day's long hours of portaging and fishing. Campers fell over themselves diving into enormous stacks of pancakes slathered with pure maple syrup and side rashers of bacon. Some swore it was the best they'd ever tasted, although their appetites had likely been sharpened by unaccustomed activity. Still Gram had a few cooking secrets up her sleeve. She used only fresh, applewood smoked slab bacon that she sliced generously, sprinkled with a pinch of sugar, and fried in a seasoned cast iron skillet until the marbled fat portion was

*(Turn to page four)*

*(From page three)*

crispy and no longer translucent. To make light and fluffy pancakes, she separated the egg whites, whipped them and folded them back into the batter. I never tried the coffee, but I know most of the men must have preferred it strong, because Grandpa once asked if he could borrow some to soak car parts.

Grandpa piloted a Piper Cub float plane that was moored south of the island in a protected channel. Taxiing to the island was restricted, but take offs and landings on the main part of the lake disturbed no one given that Brule Lake was over five miles long and Grandpa only needed about 400 feet of that. One of my jobs



was scooping up minnows, shimmering like silver coins, into old coffee cans and handing them to anglers whom Grandpa would fly to nearby lakes for trout. Brule had an enviable reputation for northern pikes and walleyes, but trout were too arrogant to pal around with the likes of them, according to Grandpa.

My memories of Brule will always be in color — Kodachrome, to be exact. Grandpa probably shot more film than bullets in those days and 35mm Kodachrome slides were about as close as you could get to capturing the island's brilliant colors and stark contrast between blinding light and absolute darkness. The canopy was so dense that the few shafts of sunlight that managed to filter through caused an explosion of color wherever they touched. It was like living in an inspirational poster.

Many of my generation have seen Brule, but don't realize it. When Hamm's decided to promote the fact that their beer was brewed in Minnesota, which is Indian for "Land of Sky Blue Water," the admen schmoozed Grandpa into disclosing some of his favorite spots for the photo shoot. (I understand cases of complimentary product were involved.) The cartoon Hamm's bear dancing to "The Land of Sky Blue Water" jingle on TV eventually became more popular and memorable than the stills. But, I occasionally see an old Hamm's scenarama bar sign, with its animated ripples, and am reminded of Brule.

In later years, Grandpa would bake bread on Tuesday evenings and often turn the occasion into a slideshow for us grandkids. We'd sift through the hundreds of gold and red boxes and cull out a few for the performance. He'd switch on the projector, with its white hot bulb that could blister skin (I did the experiment), and we'd sit on the floor eating bread

still warm from the oven and listen to Grandpa tell the stories behind the photos in his deep, sonorous voice. There were the obligatory shots of us kids fishing and swimming, but the majority were of nameless men in plaid Elmer Fudd hunting hats with huge, goofy grins on their unshaven faces holding up stringers full of glistening walleyes, northerns and trout. They were having the time of their lives.

It is a rare gift to be able to pass on your passion purely by example. Grandpa embodied all the traits that men of that era admired. He was self-determined, self-reliant, self-assured and most important, self-effacing. I can't remember a predicament, whether it was dipping a wing into a sudden crosswind to nail a water landing or snipping the barb off a fishhook to extract it from a novice fisherman's thumb, that he didn't handle with quiet competence. And if complimented, he'd pause long enough to put a match to his pipe, draw a couple of puffs and look you square in the eye. "Well," he'd say with genuine humility. "You would've done the same thing." After a while, you started believing it too.

At the beginning of the week, the chasm between the doctors and dentists, who comprised most of the campers, and my blue-collar grandfather, seemed immense. But, nature is a great equalizer. Most of these guys were living the American Dream after paying their dues in foxholes and jungles only a generation earlier. They were first in their families

to go to college and onto graduate school and were not begrudged for parlaying the GI Bill, together with plenty of hard work and sacrifice, into successful careers. Shared American values cut across class lines and most still believed in old fashioned notions like "nobody owes you a living" and "life isn't always fair" and "with freedom comes responsibility."

Friendships forged on the island lasted a lifetime and when the final handshakes and backslaps were exchanged, there were no pretenders. There were only outdoorsmen.

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*The historical society is recognized as a non-profit organization by Illinois and the U.S. government and as such has been designated as eligible to receive tax deductible gifts under the IRS tax code regulation 501 (c) (3).*



*It's individual volunteers who make a successful Memorial Day celebration. Upper left, Len Cummins and Bill Pick adjust flags before the parade; lower left, Wanda Bramer, Cedarville Lions Club president presents the history of the event; lower center, Rev. Gene McIntosh, Cedarville Baptist Church, leads the audience in prayer; lower right, Meg Shierer performs the closing ceremony; center right, James Priewe, 2012 Freeport High School graduate, reads President Lincoln's Gettysburg Address; upper right, Steve Myers, commander of the Cedarville American Legion and member of the board of the Cedarville Area Historical Society, opens the ceremony in the Cedarville Cemetery.*



*The solemn rifle salute to the dead*



*The Cedarville Lions Club was a major participant in this year's parade and cemetery ceremony.*



*More than 140 enjoyed the picnic lunch at the museum.*

## ***Perfect Weather Brings Big Memorial Day Crowd***

Despite the threat of rain, a very large crowd participated in the 2012 Cedarville Memorial Day celebration.

The parade and the trail of onlookers that traditionally follows the marchers stepped off on Mill Street at the scheduled 10 a.m. time. After pausing at Cedar Creek to toss flowers into the water to honor Cedarville's naval dead, the column walked to the cemetery for a ceremony that included Bill Pick reading the names of the 167 veterans who are buried in Cedarville.

Cedarville's American Legion rifle squad this year was missing Al Beidler of Freeport who died in November 2011 and is buried in Freeport. However, the village was pleased that his widow, his daughter and his granddaughter chose to attend the Cedarville event. His granddaughter was selected for the Cedar Creek flower ceremony.

At the closing of this ceremony, the crowd made its way to the Cedarville Museum to enjoy a picnic lunch sponsored by the Cedarville Area Historical Society.



*Narcissa Engle, Theresa Morris and Diane Hagemann manned the picnic dessert table.*



*Winifred Phillips Macomber, 2008*

## **Tickets for Three Music Programs Going, Going**

Only 35 tickets remain for admission to the Cedarville Museum series of three programs featuring live American music and historical commentary. The \$20 ticket is admission to all of the programs. No single program tickets will be sold.

All programs are at 7:30 p.m. on a Tuesday. July 3 will feature gospel with Carl Cole and Company; July 24 will showcase the male barbershop quartet "Cadence"; on August 21 "Styles Junction" will perform Appalachian bluegrass.

Checks should be sent to CAHS, P. O. Box 336, Cedarville, IL 61013. For more information call Jim Bade, 815-563-4485.

## ***Winifred Macomber, 96, Society Member Dies***

Winifred E. Macomber, 96, Lena, died May 15 at the Stephenson Nursing Center in Freeport. A member of the Cedarville Area Historical Society, she was a major contributor in 2007 to the construction of the Cedarville Museum's Rosabelle Cronau Research Center.

She was born in 1916 to Harry and Ethel Phillips. She married Vernon H. Macomber in 1939 in the only marriage ceremony conducted at the no-longer existing Damascus Baptist Church.

She was a graduate of Freeport High School, attended Illinois Teacher's College and later received her bachelor's degree at National Lewis University.

She taught at Wagner Country School prior to her marriage and then returned to teach full time in 1964 at Lena-Winslow School, where she retired.

She is survived by three children, David of Lena, Barbara Woessner of Shannon and Barton of Belvidere and nine grandchildren, three step-grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her husband, parents, two sisters, two brothers and one son-in law.

Internment was at the Cedarville Cemetery.