

Interview with Chuck Lamon, August 2014



We enjoyed a wonderful conversation with Chuck Lamon who started coming up to Penlake in 1964 for a two-week summer vacation. Chuck has two daughters Martha and Molly, Martha having taken over the family cottage in Grassmere Bay and where this conversation took place. Chuck now resides in Huntsville. He and his wife Pat (deceased) were first drawn to this area through their love of skiing at Hidden Valley every other weekend during the season. They quickly got into the social spirit of the day, getting to know the McCanns, BJ Thompson's, and their neighbour to the south, my father, Wilf Houghton. Chuck, Pat and family would enjoy picnics at various lakes in the area and places where they could launch a canoe and explore.

It was sometime in the late 60's, early 70s when a large group of Penlakers with a love of sailing and a sailboat at the dock decided to organize an informal race every Sunday at 1 o'clock. It was a keen core group including Chuck, Ralph Thompson, Bob Moffat, Bill McCann, Ian Bates, Bill and Jean Fraser, the Hutchison's, Ann

Kennard, Ted Armstrong, the McGirr's, Mike and John Eastmure and Dick and Sheila Morse as well as the Houghtons. They were the inspiration for the Penlake sailing series that continues to this day. Most owned Albacores which were the significant fleet on the lake during the 70's and 80's.

In 1973 Chuck and Pat committed to a more permanent and winterized residence by putting in a full foundation and moving their cottage forward onto the new structure. Chuck's daughter Martha, a nurse at Fairburn, and her family live in the cottage home now along with her daughter Phoebe and son Pierre.

Many years ago in the late 70's the Lamon's together with their neighbours the McCanns, acquired the 125+ acre farm property running between Shaw's Road and Maplehurst Road from farmer George Hill. Both loved the natural state of this site and were not anxious to see it developed around them which might make their quiet access lane into a very busy road. The property was eventually deeded to the Muskoka Heritage Trust except for the 2 acres that were granted to the Penlake Association ("PLA") along with the remaining 124 acres to which the PLA was granted stewardship rights. There is a full write up of this wonderful legacy in the Penlake website under the "Pen Notes and Archives" link, and it is the 4th article under the "Lake News Archive".

Chuck and Pat's family grew up in Brantford Ontario as he was a doctor in that city but the Huntsville roots were strong as Pat grew up here. Her family were associated with Vanity Fair, a long time Huntsville business that many will remember. Pat's brother Reg worked at Bigwin Inn, in those early years. The family have strong memories of the Algonquin steamer that plied Lake Vernon, Fairy Lake and Penlake but the Portage Flyer Railway had ceased to operate by the time they acquired their cottage.

The cottage has evolved with time, originally heated with electricity and a wood fireplace, the house is now served by gas and a geothermal unit.

Chuck has many great memories of life by the lake and, like many of us, is concerned with what the Deerhurst property has become and the future impact it will have on our sensitive ecosystem and the quiet community spirit of the lake as the population increases. Chuck is now married to Phyllis and resides in Huntsville.

by Tony Houghton