

Museum on Main Street, Smithsonian Institution

Love at the Lake--Carol McCarthy Talks about Her Family's Sweet Connection to a Minnesota Lake

As told by Carol McCarthy

Detroit Lakes, Minnesota

Story Narrative: "I'm Carol McCarthy from Detroit Lakes. I work in latent broadcasting in news, but my story about water, I wouldn't be here probably if weren't for Detroit Lake, or our wonderful lakes, because my mother, who was a nurse going to school in I think it was North Dakota came for vacation one summer day in August. My dad was getting his hair cut at a building up on the north side and saw her come to town. Just knew she was the woman that he was going to marry.

As things progressed, it was a weekend and there was a dance at the pavilion on Detroit Lake that night, and of course, my dad was very shy, so he noticed that my mom- he could have been a stalker back in that day, but they didn't have stalking back then. Anyway, he was looking in the window at the dance and he saw this beautiful woman in the pavilion, it was a ten cent dance. So he went in and asked her to dance. They danced all night long and said their goodbyes.

The next morning, she and I believe her sister and another friend, who were all going to nursing school, they'd come in on the bus. She rented a boat from Clem's Marina and they were out sitting in the middle of the lake reading their paper, their Sunday paper. Low and behold, my dad comes rowing in his boat. He lived in Deadshot Bay, which was a good trek, so he had to go under a long bridge into big Detroit Lake, and row into little Detroit Lake, so it took him probably a good hour or so. My dad was a strong man, but it took him a while to get there. He rowed in, and he rowed up to their boat, and said, "I'd like to date you," I don't know how they did it, they didn't have cell phones back then. This was back in the 1940s.

So, they connected and I think they corresponded by mail, letters, She had to go back to Little Falls where she had gotten a job, I believe at St. Gabriel's there. So he went back and forth and dated her, and it was kind of history after that. They fell in love and had 10 children in Detroit Lakes. I'm the best, I'm number 10, so they got it right. But that's why I wouldn't be here if it weren't for Detroit Lake."

This story was collected by Shanai Matteson in conjunction with the "Be Here: Main Street" project from the MuseWeb Foundation, intended to capture Americans' stories about their neighborhoods, their waterways, and their towns.

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