

# HISTORY OF *Lake of Bays Association*

by Connie Briant, Immediate Past President

*The story of the Lake of Bays Association is full of humour, boundless energy, foresight, and dedication to preserving the beauty of our Lake; it is also full of goodwill between permanent and seasonal residents.*

**1926** One of the earliest families on Glenmount Road, on the south-eastern shore of Lake of Bays, was that of Lester E. Weaver, whose son William first came to the lake at the age of 5, in 1908, when the trip from Hespeler (Cambridge) to Glenmount took 36 hours - 3 trains and 2 steamers. Lester felt the need to establish an association of full time and seasonal residents. At some point he asked the residents of Norway Point to join the Glenmount group. *We understand that in these early years the average number of members was 12, all male.* Meetings were held in the Glenmount Hotel dining room. Mr. Weaver chaired the group from 1926 until 1941, when he was succeeded by Dr H. VanWyck, and then by Mr R. Miller.

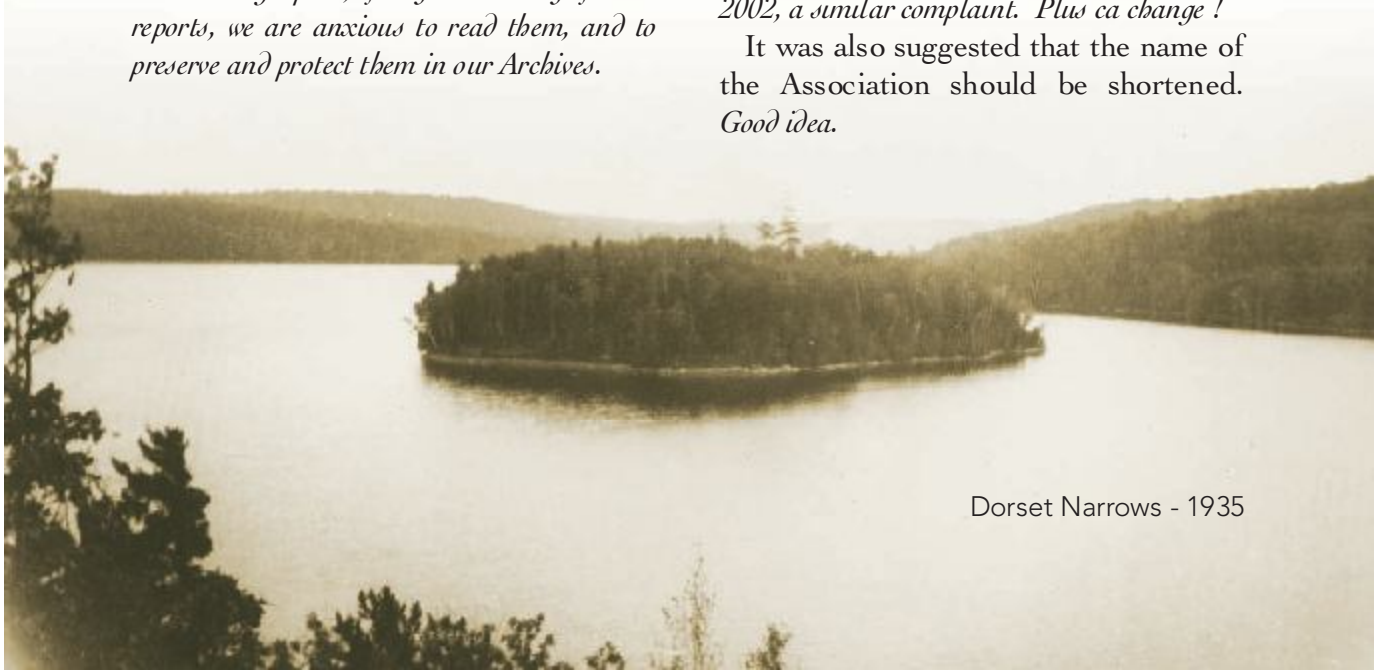
*At the moment this is all we know about the early years! We are told that a yearly report was mimeographed; if anyone has any of these reports, we are anxious to read them, and to preserve and protect them in our Archives.*

**1951** William E. Weaver, Lester's son, became president, and change began. The Association expanded from Norway Point and Glenmount to the entire lake, directors were selected from every bay, and membership grew. Meetings were rotated between the Bigwin Inn Dance Hall and Britannia Hotel.

**1952** There were 112 families in the Association; 16 were from the United States, and 11 were permanent residents on the lake.

Fees were \$1.00 per annum, and mimeographing the Yearbook cost \$10. Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Lake of Bays Resident and Tourist Association held on Aug. 24th 1952 at Bigwin Inn, with W.E. in the chair, report that "Complaints were made of the operation of noisy motor boats, particularly outboard engines without mufflers. Following some discussion it was moved....and adopted, that the Secretary write or speak to any offenders asking their co-operation" *You will see in the Membership Services Committee Report, 2002, a similar complaint. Plus ca change !*

It was also suggested that the name of the Association should be shortened. *Good idea.*



Dorset Narrows - 1935

**1953** A new constitution replaced two earlier undated ones. It stated that the object of the Association

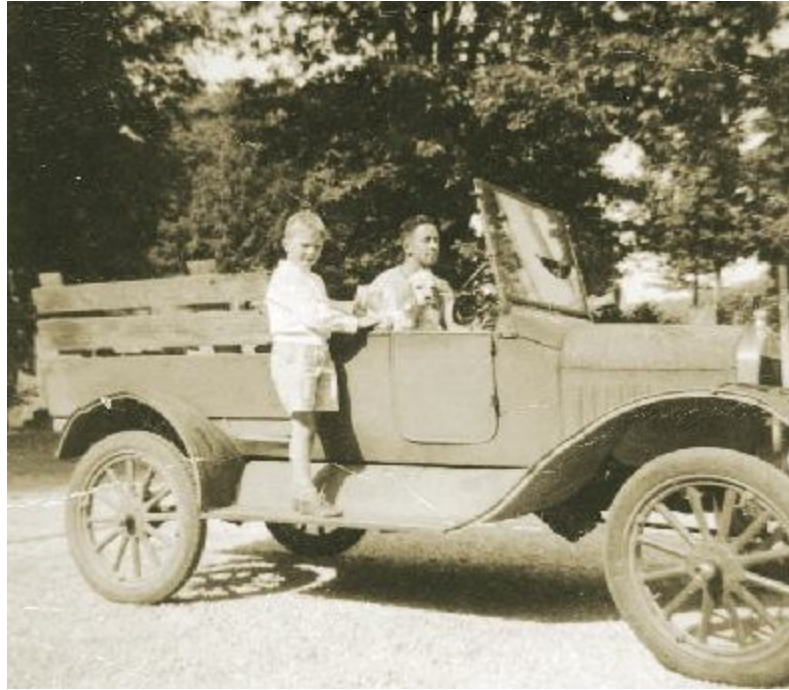
“shall be to unite all those interested in the Lake of Bays and district for the purpose of protecting and promoting the interest of all property owners preserving healthful, sanitary conditions, and scenic beauty in this vicinity representing the interests of the whole of the Lake of Bays before local, provincial and national authorities, and taking whatever action may be deemed fitting and to the common good, in such questions and issues as may from time to time arise. Such matters may include:

- a) water levels
- b) fire protection
- c) health
- d) roads
- e) maintenance of public wharves and docks
- f) marking of shoals and dangers to navigation
- g) fish, game, wild life, flora and forest protection, and stocking of waters with fish
- h) taxes
- i) protection of the property of members
- j) building restrictions.”

*Not so very different from our goals today, is it?*

**1954** Membership had risen to 350, a 200% increase in 2 years.

**1960** Meetings were still rotated between the Bigwin Inn Dance Hall and Britannia Hotel. There was a request at



Don Boothby in his Model T

the AGM that night lights should be shaded, as they were a danger to navigation. *Today our concern is that we want to watch the night sky.*

**1961** LOBA burgees (boat pennants) were produced for sale at \$2. *Anyone for a repeat?*

**1963** With Paul White presiding at the AGM, a most interesting rumour was reported; the new owners of Bigwin Island wished to construct a causeway and bridge across the Little Channel. Members objected to this rumoured proposal on the grounds that

- it would impair the natural beauty of the channel, islands and peninsula,
- the many boats using the channel would be funneled through a narrow passage,
- it would prevent sailing through the channel,
- it would restrict the flow of water and fish through the channel,
- it would overburden the township road,
- it would depress property values,

- its construction by public funds would be costly and unnecessary.

*(The subject was raised again at the 1968 AGM; a resolution opposing the causeway was passed by a slim majority. We understand that the proposal was never presented to Council).*

**1964** Mr Pearson of the Ontario Department of Planning and Development told the Association “We are in trouble if this Council (the Muskoka District) doesn’t meet oftener than twice a year.”

The first advertising appeared in the Yearbook. On the back of the front cover there is a charming ad by Britannia Hotel inviting members to dinner with dancing (\$2.50) every Tuesday, Friday and Saturday and to a Summer Theatre with the Straw Hat Players every Monday (tickets for dinner and the show \$5.) Ladies could golf every Wednesday afternoon with a children’s hostess

included in the green fees. *Those were the days!*

**1965** John Govan was president, and introduced a system of maps which allowed you to locate a friend’s cottage by water. Each member indicated his/her area and location. These maps were updated each year until 1974 and sold to members. *(Members telephone numbers were not listed so burglars couldn’t check to see whether the property was vacant before docking. Some of Mr Govan’s maps are still used by Area Captains.)* As well, the Association sold navigation maps with clearly marked buoys. *Where was the Coast Guard?*

**1968** President Harry Wright informed members that “Lake of Bays will be the object of greatly increased pressure of development.” *(Read any recent President’s report for the same statement!)* At this time there were 4 township



St. John’s in the Woods - 1950’s





Marsh's Falls Bridge - 1930's

councils - Franklin (population 667), Brunel (1,048), Ridout (129) and McLean (427). *The Township of Lake of Bays was not created until 1971.* LOBA maintained that fractured governments provided poor planning, inadequate pollution control, differentials in services, and problems of representation; we joined with Muskoka Lakes Association (MLA) and Penn Lake to retain a consultant and prepare a brief to present to the Patterson Commission on District Government. *This was the beginning of a partnership that still exists.*

In the brief, LOBA spoke of "taxation without representation", and concluded that "there was a need for proper representation of cottagers without distinction or qualification; methods were suggested such as summer voting or postal ballot." *Postal voting was finally achieved in 1997.* "It was suggested that the boundaries of the District should be revised to include the nearest possible limits to the related watersheds and similar areas with common problems." *To-day's directors are still asking for watershed boundaries. You see what I meant when I said our early directors had foresight!!* The Yearbook had an excellent article on

the 1858 Crown Survey of Lake of Bays, which established the 66' road allowance around the lake. The 66' is measured from high water level at 1858, and that is what is shown on your survey. When the Township of Lake of Bays was established, the crown rights were transferred to the Township. *They are now for sale.*

**1970** The Association became heavily involved in water quality, the first Pollution Control Committee was established, and the Yearbook contained a six page article from the Biology Branch of the Ontario Water Resources Commission. It warned that no one should drink untreated lake water, that septic systems should be checked to be sure they were functioning, and that no one should use detergents with high phosphate content. That year LOBA spent almost as much on water testing (\$675) as on printing the Yearbook (\$705).

In the same year, Jack Hatkoski of Dwight was elected first mayor of Lake of Bays Township. He was followed in 1973 by Harvey Van Clieaf, who resigned after a few months due to the



The Blackwell Boys and Clare Salmon

pressure of work. Malcolm Scott was appointed mayor, and served from 1973 to 1994. In that year Tom Pinckard became the 4th Mayor of the Township. Tom is now serving his third term. *From Jack to Tom, all have been members of LOBA!*

**1972** Brink Weaver followed his father and grandfather as President of LOBA. *If any family has left its mark on the Lake, it is the Weavers.*

**1973** There were a total of 1,359 members, 11% from the United States. People said there were more American license plates in Robinson's parking lot than Canadian. Many of our American families have been on the lake for a number of generations, and in later years a journalist wrote "what I recall...is how they loved this country in a way that we Canadians are only now comprehending for ourselves."

Bob Fasken, Chair of the Fish and Game Committee, reported that "Lake of Bays is...considered one of the cleanest bodies of water in Muskoka" The Property Committee reported that "land use must be managed for the good of all, and with consideration for future generations." *And we still believe it.*

John Govan, Chairman of the Pollution

Committee, "developed some unique measuring devices and methods. Tests are now made at varying depths for nitrates, phosphates, iron and dissolved oxygen. Tests are taken at surface and at 100' depths." President Weaver reported that Mr Govan's programme has been more extensive than that of the Water Control Division of the Ontario Department of the Environment. *We continue to lead the lakes in our testing programs.*

**1974** Paul Tapley's "When the Ice Went Out in the Lake of Bays" covered the years from 1908 to 1974. The earliest the ice went out was March 31st in 1946, and the latest was May 12th in 1926. *Quite a spread. After Paul (LOBA President from 1986 to 1988) died, his son Brian kept on with the records. We wonder when break up will be for 2002. And does anyone know when was the latest for the Lake to freeze over? Was it this last year?*

**1977** 50th Anniversary of the Lake of Bays Association was celebrated with a special larger issue of the Yearbook. Colour photos appeared for the first time; photos of Past Presidents, and a brief outline of the accomplishments of the Association were included.

President Doug Newby reported

that the Association had joined FOCA (Federation of Ontario Cottage Associations), was taking steps to incorporate, and had sent a brief to the Hon. Darcy McKeough, Minister of the Treasury, Economics and Interprovincial Affairs, on the subject of voting in absentia by cottage owners. *Nine years after our first request, and twenty more before it actually happened.*

Fees were increased to \$5 per year, and memberships were now to apply to households. There had previously been four types of members

- a) members
- b) associate members
- c) junior members (aged from 10 to 18)
- d) honorary members.

If father was the annual member, then mother was the non-voting associate, and the children were non-voting junior members. *No wonder their membership was often as high as ours is to-day, when the population of the Lake was very much smaller.*

There were 39 members on the Board and three of them were women. *All were known as Mrs. with their husband's initials! Ten years later, seven of thirty Board members were women, still listed by their husband's initial (with their given name in brackets). Today, three out of eight of our Executive*

*Committee members are women, seven of our twenty three directors are women, and another ten sit on committees. All of them use their given names.*

**1980** Ruth Daniel became our first woman president. *It was to be ten years before our second, and another eight before our third. Then, of course, we had two in a row.*

**1982** The AGM was held in the Senior Citizens Hall at Dwight, since neither Bigwin nor Britannia were in operation. Hugh Mackenzie was District of Muskoka Chairman. *Today, he is Mayor of Huntsville.* The major problems requiring the attention of the Board were tent and trailer parks, (Four Winds in Brunel), acid rain, and a new secondary plan for the Township. This new plan had involved much discussion on the classification of "seasonal residences". All second homes were designated "seasonal"; they could neither expect nor receive services such as school busing or snow ploughing. *Never mind that these services were available to other residents who paid the same tax rate, and that seasonal people were beginning to retire to their summer homes. This was a bone of contention for several years. A compromise was*



Iroquois II north of Point Ideal (early 50's)



achieved by 1985 when the Township Plan classified "seasonal residential" as "waterfront residential with service limitations". That's politics!

**1983** President Robin Cumine reported that LOBA "has been fortunate to be served by elected representatives who have been available and highly responsive to our concern". However, Robin went on to report that in particular "we have not been as successful in our relations with Huntsville" on the development and expansion of a trailer camp facility in Brunel ward. *I think that current boards might say much the same thing.* A new topic in this issue was the imposition of capital gains tax on cottages! *This one is too painful to discuss.*

One of the more interesting articles in the Yearbook was "Comments on Acid Rain" by John Govan, BSc, PEng, MPCA... and a realist. *If you have the '85 Yearbook, do read this one.* Here is a short excerpt.

"For some eleven or twelve years now, attention of Lake of Bays residents has been turned towards pollution matters. If we don't have any concerns of our own, the pollution probers will be always ready to give us a few."

"Four or five years later, there was a cry about mercury level in fish in the Lakes. When nobody could be found to blame for the high mercury levels, it

was decided to forget about it and let the fish cope with it as best they could."

**1985** A major concern was school board expenses. 70% of our tax bill went to the school board. The secondary teachers were out on strike for 6 weeks, seasonal children could not attend local schools, and seasonal residents could not run for school board. LOBA lobbied the Province for relief. *Mike Harris finally gave it to us, but possibly not quite as you wanted!*

LOBA bought its first computer, we had 1238 members, and the Yearbook was produced at a loss of \$3,547; mem-



Judge Barton on Bigwin dock waiting for the Bigwin Steamer

bers were surveyed on their retirement plans; Point Ideal Lodge was for sale...the Council introduced a new Tree Cutting Bylaw, and a new Noise Control Bylaw. *Enforcement was another matter.* The Lake of Bays Heritage Foundation was established, directed by Robin Cumine, George Daniels, Simon Miles, Ed Brezina, and Doug McTaggart. The Foundation was incorporated, and sought a charitable license. One of its first activities was to commission a study of Wildlife Habitats, which sold for \$25 and went into many printings.

**1987** Current Connection was introduced as a quarterly newsletter. *The first issues were on legal size paper with just 4 pages. Over the years we have shifted to 5 issues per year of 8 to 12 pages on letter sized paper. The interesting point, however, is that the logo and colour are very much the same. We are searching for a full set of C.C.'s for the Archives. Can anyone help?*

Our mission statement was written. **"The purpose of the Lake of Bays Association is to promote, maintain, and enhance a clean, healthy and natural environment, a well serviced community, and a safe and peaceful Lake of Bays."** *We've done pretty well with these goals except for noisy boats and jet skis!*

**1989** William Weaver, President from 1951-1955, died March 20th. The yearbook carried a full page In Memorium. Another Past President, Paul Tapley, died in the fall.

Under the guidance of President George Daniels, a number of interesting issues were dealt with. George reported that many of his neighbours remarked on the ever increasing "condo" development and excessive density along the Hwy 60 corridor from Huntsville to Deerhurst. "The point to all of this is, the pressure on our Lake of Bays inventory and lifestyle is here now - we're living Future Shock." George pledged renewed efforts

on zoning, planning and land use legislation.

*By the way, this issue of the Yearbook has some very interesting photographs and stories on heritage properties on the Lake. Editor Shirley Prittie is to be congratulated.*

The Water Safety Committee of LOBA requested that a boating speed limit of 9 km/hour within 30 meters of shore be introduced. Township Council approved; the request was sent to the Ministry of Natural Resources, and finally to the Federal Department of Justice. *It passed in 1991. In 1992 the Feds changed the limit to maximum 10 kph within 30 meters of shore, so you may see both signs.* Doug Lawson, Chairperson of the Taxation Committee, reported that the Province had produced a green paper on the subject of lot levies; money raised by the sale of new lots would be applied to capital spending projects by school boards and councils. *Each time this comes to District Council, the developers and town councillors oppose and the townships favour it.*

**1991** The first Action Fund Donations appear on the Financial Statements. *I can only assume the introduction of this new fund appeared in Current Connection. It certainly wasn't mentioned in the Yearbook.*

Waste management had become a major problem for the Township. Over \$800,000 was spent to try to bring the dumps up to new provincial standards, and more money would be required in coming years. Eventually responsibility for waste disposal was passed to the District.

The Planning and Zoning Committee Chairperson, Robert Blakely, announced that "Echo Valley, Foxwood Inn, Marsh's Falls, repatriation of shoreline from the Town of Huntsville, and Hollow Valley are all significant development concerns before the Committee." "The Bigwin Island Working Committee has received information that intensive





The Campbell family playing golf behind their cottage on Glenmount Road in 1910

housing or commercial development for the island is neither desirable nor feasible.” *Here begins a decade of Bigwin committee work.*

**1992** President Betty Day died on May 14th in the second year of her term. *I have heard from so many people what a wonderful person she was. One can only wonder how she carried on her responsibilities in that final year of her life. Somehow, after Betty’s death, the nomination function failed us. The next four Presidents did not have a full house on the Executive Committee, and as a result shouldered a very heavy burden. Also as a result, the Association decided in 1995 that they needed an Executive Co-ordinator; and David Johnstone joined our staff. David had been a Director for a number of years, and served on many committees, so he was an ideal candidate for the job.*

The Association announced that it favoured a programme of tile bed re-inspection every 5 years, to ensure that our septic systems were working. Bill Wardle, Chair of the Environment

Committee reported “We believe that most remedial action is a reaction to past mistakes”, and “protection and improvement of the environment must be an individual responsibility and effort”. Projects for the committee included water testing, gypsy moth information, spawning bed development, septic tank re-inspections, and zebra mussels. The Tax Committee, working with FOCA, sent a submission to the Fair Tax Committee. The chief complaint was education tax.

**1993** The Planning and Zoning Committee decided to set up a Long Range Plan for Lake of Bays; this turned out to be a major initiative and expense for the Association, and to this day we refer proudly to that plan. The goals established were: sustainable growth, maintenance of water quality, control over development, preservation and enhancement of heritage, character and identity, and watershed based land use planning. We intended to establish a



Eleanor Woodside showing off her catch

computerized database to monitor changes in our watershed, so that we could measure the cumulative effects of development. *This major undertaking proved beyond the financial and technical ability of the Association, but the newly established Muskoka Watershed Council may yet achieve it. The Association has pursued and is still pursuing the goals as established by this Committee chaired by Robert Blakely.*

**1994** Margaret Casey, Chair of the Environment Committee, introduced a 4-year plan to distribute materials on the care and feeding of septic systems and shoreline naturalization to every cottage around our 340 mile shoreline. We organized our first All Candidates Meeting.

**1995** LOBA, under President Doug Lawson, was heavily involved in the Echo Valley development, and was advised that it “was not planned and proposed in accordance with the Planning Act.” The Bigwin Island proposal had reached the OMB, and LOBA was a participant along with the developer, the

Township, and the Ministry of Natural Resources. The Association employed a lawyer *and* a planner.

This was also the year that LOBA joined with MLA and GBA in a Group Property Tax Appeal. *More than 25% of Muskoka taxpayers appealed their new assessments. We felt the market value assessment was regressive, and that the regression analysis process was unfair, inconsistent, and incomprehensible to the lay person.*

This is where I entered the scene and spent countless hours studying assessment rolls, calling taxpayers to ask that their properties be part of the sample on which we based our case, and attending hearings with co-chair Mary Warner Smith. Before the matter was settled, we had 3 hearings over 3 years: the Assessment Review Board, the OMB and the Divisional Court of Ontario. This was financed by contributions from the appellants. *I tell you all this to illustrate just how much work is involved in many of our activities and how hard your Directors work on your behalf.*

For the Township, this was also a landmark year, as new Mayor Tom Pinckard, former chair of LOBA's Planning and Zoning Committee, decided that the citizens should undertake a Visioning Process, to be followed by an Official Plan Review, and then the drafting of new comprehensive zoning bylaws. *The Bylaw Committee is just now completing its work, and we hope this will pass inspection in the coming year. Many of LOBA's Directors served on these three committees, putting in countless hours of travel and meetings. Karl Jaffary and Margaret Casey still attend bi-weekly Zoning By-law meetings.*

**1997** Postal ballots were used in the Municipal election. Our Executive Coordinator was on hand to shepherd this through Council. In the November election, Lake of Bays Township had the highest voter participation in the Province.



Karl Jaffary's Kayak, one of the first on the lake, enjoyed by John Woodside.

This was also the year that the Township office burned down leaving the staff in portables, with smoke and water damaged records... *and the taxpayers with substantial bills over and above the insurance, to cover our handsome new office at Dwight.* As a result of heavy expenditures on legal and planning assistance, the Association had drained its retained earnings and its Action Fund Reserves, and it was urgent that the bank account be refilled. The Board, under President Margaret Casey, Past President Doug Lawson, and the Treasurer (me), launched a Patrons of the Lake Campaign in 1997- 98 which initially brought in \$30,000. *Since then the Annual*

*Action Fund contributions have carried us forward to a substantial bank balance. This position says to developers that they had better get it right the first time.*

**1999** The Board was restored to a full Executive Committee, with two Vice Presidents. *And a good thing too, since the President at that time spent 3 months of the winter in her home in Costa Rica.* Executive Co-ordinator Dave Johnstone reported that total local tax levied over the previous 4 years had increased 61%. As a result of these excessive local tax increases, the External Affairs Committee informed Council that there should be no increase in total taxes levied, more transparency and openness in the budget setting process, and more accountability and control on expendi-

tures throughout the year. Eight other cottage associations in the township supported this position. *Since that time, Township budgets have been scrutinized step by step throughout the year.*

President Margaret Casey in her final message remarked on the change in sophistication of new and remodeled cottages on the lake, and wondered "will we be happy with life at Lake of Bays in ten years?"

District and Municipal Councils examined ways to restructure government in Muskoka; Gardner Church was appointed facilitator. LOBA joined with Muskoka Lakes Association, Georgian



Bay Association, and Township of Muskoka Lakes Ratepayers, to form the Muskoka Liaison Committee, (MLC), and participated actively in the process. Under the direction of VP Cliff Hatch, LOBA worked on joint statements which clearly indicated our key priorities, criteria, and concerns. One of the most important of these concerns was the protection of the Township Official Plan; a second was equal representation for seasonal and permanent residents.

**2000** Facilitator Gardiner Church submitted his report in February favouring a single tier government for the District. A north/south split with Lake of Bays joined to Huntsville in the north was a less desirable option, said Church. The issues were complex and not resolved until the summer. In the final of three votes, (by the Mayors or Restructuring Committee, the District Council, and each Municipal Council) four of the six municipalities defeated the single tier proposal, and so we have the status quo. *LOBA supported the single tier, and felt that there were many advantages to it: lower costs of government, fairer representation of seasonal and rural voters, and an opportunity for new watershed boundaries.*

The President's message dealt with the coming urbanization of the Lake, and what individual members could do to help manage growth. A long awaited septic re-inspection program was begun by the Township. Bos Engineering and Environmental Services was hired to carry

out the task. The re-inspection of over 5000 systems will be spread over 5 years. *This was first requested by LOBA over 50 years before.*

**2001** The MLC shared the cost of consultant economist Dr Peter Tomlinson's services to advise us on the impact of the Current Value Assessment system. "Basically, Dr Tomlinson said that, given current value assessment, over time more of the tax burden of the District will fall on the shoulders of those whose property is in relatively greater demand. We residential property owners in the three townships now pay 57% of the total tax bill of the District while we represent only 50% of the population. As reassess-



Tom Salmon Lake of Bays - 1930's

ment increases, our share of total District assessment and our share of the District tax bill will increase." Dr Tomlinson recommended that over a particular level of tax share paid by the rural residents, all additional expenditure requirements of the District should be financed on a per unit basis - ie a flat tax.

Executive Co-ordinator David Johnstone is now (spring 2002) sitting on a District Committee to consider the long run impact of CVA, which flows out of the Tomlinson Report.

*And so we reach our 75th anniversary year. I think we can conclude that the Lake of Bays is a very special place because so many of its seasonal and permanent residents have cared enough to spend countless hours working to maintain that quality. The Directors have shown remarkable consistency and persistence in policies.*

*One remarkable feature is that the same names appear and reappear in different roles or after intervals. Yet another is the pattern of generational participation in the Board. One example stands out and must be mentioned: the father-son team of John H. and Fraser Govan have a combined record of over 40 years of continuous service.*

*Another point I must make is that though I have not the space to mention the feature articles of the Yearbooks, they are really superb. I read them from start to finish and enjoyed them all. Try it on a rainy day.*

*The story of the first 75 years of the Lake of Bays Association is told in our Yearbooks from 1952 to*

*2002. The activities of the first 25 years (1926-1951) are recorded on mimeographed sheets and these are still missing. If anyone has any of these reports we are most anxious to read them and to preserve and protect them in the LOBA Archives.*

*As you would expect new technology has changed the way we do business at LOBA: from email, first to directors, and now to members, to the web page, to printing orders in full colour and quantities of 5000, the founding fathers would be amazed!*



Summer reading