

## Lakeside Retreat

This is a story about a family, friends, a secluded lake (many of the locals are not even aware of the lake or its whereabouts), stories, fishing, campfires, work, rest, relaxation, more stories and other tall tales, good food (everything tastes better at the lake), ice-cutting and a lifetime of memories.

Arnold Lake stands proud at a higher elevation than the finger lakes and is fed wholly by underground springs. Located in the Susquehanna River Valley, nestled between the Catskills and Adirondacks, this 52-acre lake proved vital to the local economy during the latter 19th and early 20th centuries for agriculture, brewing, growing hops, and baseball. There were summer campgrounds ringing the shores and during the winter, it was widely known as the cleanest source of ice in the area. Even today the lake still boasts crystal clear water.

As the story goes, my grandfather, Hardvik Elmer Hanson, Hardy for short, became acquainted with Arnold Lake in the winter of 1914 when his father, Hans, and brothers Chris, William, and Lester, first went there to cut ice. Ice cutting is a part of Scandinavian culture but was also a part of life during that period. They would travel from the family farm with their horse, sleigh, and ice-cutting tools, which are now proudly displayed in the peak of the multi-purpose room. Their farm was located just South of the new Ommegang Brewery at the corner of Clintonville Road and County Highway 33. They would head down Clintonville Road, cross the Susquehanna River on a bridge that no longer exists, go South on State Highway 28, then West up County Highway 45 and left up the steep hill to Arnold Lake Road. The round trip was only 12 miles but took four to six hours based on weather and the weight of the ice. When this ice was cut during the depths of winter, it could be packed in sawdust, stored in the icehouse, and kept until mid-September. This was important in the days before wide-spread refrigeration. Ice blocks could be removed from the icehouses and taken to homes to keep kitchen ice boxes cold.

In his early thirties (he was a late bloomer), Hardy met Marjorie Felter, my Danish grandmother, while delivering milk to her apartment. After a two-year courtship, they married June 6, 1938 in Hartwick Seminary. In addition to peddling milk, my grandfather sold automobiles (Studebaker) and farm equipment while working for Ralph Oliver, a local entrepreneur. At the urging of Mr.

Oliver, my grandfather started a business called Oneonta Tractor Sales located on upper East Street in Oneonta.

My mother, Linda, and my uncle, Ron, were raised in the house located on the same property as my grandfather's business. Unfortunately, customers of a business like this show up at the proprietor's house, often at inopportune times, to drop off equipment for servicing or purchase parts or new equipment, and in many cases just to visit. This did not always sit well with my grandmother, who we called Nanny. Like most homemakers, she wanted a quiet home life. Sometimes, they just needed to get away from the demands of a growing business and not always be at the heart of the community.

In the summer of 1943, my grandfather purchased a property from William and Angelique Bryan on the shallow end of Arnold Lake. The broad shallows were perfect and without a steep drop off, so his kids could enjoy the lake, fish, and learn to swim safely. More importantly, it was a short walk from the driveway to the door and did not require walking up or down a steep bank like other properties at the lake. The Hanson family would spend their summers lakeside after school was out for the summer. My grandfather would commute back and forth to work, a ten-mile drive, down the "back road" assuming you did not mind the dust and gravel.

The "camp" was also becoming a destination for extended family and friends. My grandfather was an innovative man; I learned that he was one of the first owners of a motorboat on Arnold Lake and taught his children to waterski with a custom-built ramp in the early days of the sport. The camp was an idyllic getaway with clean air, spring water and basic amenities like an outhouse in the early days. Later a party telephone was installed. It was not uncommon for the family to take an evening swim in the lake all while sharing a bar of Ivory soap. The family continued to build memories in this corner of the world.

As the Hanson kids grew up, Hardy and his family bought adjoining property when it became available. On October 12, 1992, my sister and I were deeded the property as this was the wish of my grandfather. Managing a property from afar is no easy task and in 2004, after twelve years of shared ownership, my wife, Robin, and I bought out my sister and brother-in-law.

My grandfather was my mentor, hero...and a father figure. He taught me so much from an early age. Like him, I always knew I would someday be a business owner. He taught me to follow my passion, which over time became woodworking and construction. Since my childhood, I have loved to work with my hands. During college, I worked during the day as a cabinetmaker and carpenter, then went to school at night. In 1995, at the age of twenty-eight, I started a construction business with a college friend who was also the best man in my wedding. My grandfather never told me how difficult it could be to be a business owner. He knew what I was getting into but knew I would not listen to his advice. My grandfather, who did not graduate high school, often commented that that "the best education is better learned the hard way."

After twenty-five years of owning and operating my construction company, I decided to pursue other passions and opportunities, but not without building a great team, making some lifelong friends, and participating in some amazing projects that allowed me to travel to such far-away places as Spain, South Korea, and Canada from Halifax to Victoria.

One of my favorites, and most difficult projects, was expedited by mother-nature. In 2016 we had planned a renovation of the lake property, but a freak windstorm toppled fourteen trees on the property. Our expanded renovation now included excavation, landscaping, foundation, and structural repairs plus finishes both inside and out. A special thank you to the local craftspeople, our family and my own Central-Ohio based team who helped coordinate and perform a wide variety of work over many months.

I am proud to say the camp, now known as Lakeside Retreat, is fully renovated, with many unique and custom amenities, plus hand-crafted and inherited furnishings. For example, we built the kitchen and coffee table from fallen trees on the property. Other furniture was donated and restored by our extended family. We now feel comfortable sharing our property with family, friends, and guests.

As my family and I enter a new chapter of life (i.e., kids off to college; new career, the 2<sup>nd</sup> half) I can look back and feel confident that my grandfather, Hardvik “Hardy” Hanson (October 4, 1906 to March 17, 1998) would be proud.

We trust that your time at Arnold Lake and Lakeside Retreat will be memorable and the stories will be told well into the future.

With gratitude – Wade F. Hungerford



Other short stories to follow:

1. The purchase
  - a. Access to the lake
  - b. The garage
2. Early improvements
  - a. Water
  - b. Electric and the string system for light switches
  - c. Shoreline
  - d. Boathouse
  - e. Heat to minimize “campy-damp.”
  - f. Fireplace
  - g. Woodshed
3. Settling into lake life
  - a. The cats that liked to swim
  - b. Ivory soap
  - c. Watersports (skiing and dinking)
4. My childhood
  - a. My lake heroes
  - b. Learning to fish
  - c. How to prepare a fish
5. My adult life
  - a. Inheriting 50 years of a seasonal camp and countless guests
  - b. Updates and Renovations
6. Leaving a Legacy
  - a. Purchase of the Harrison property