



Thelma Begeman

Meyer Ellinger

Thelma Begeman Meyer Ellinger was my Mom, and her ashes are in the Memorial Garden. My name is Jan Ketchum (Janet Meyer) and although I now live in Oregon, Lake Louise will always be a part of me.

When I was young, we lived in Mom's hometown of Allegan, Michigan. Her husband, Richard Meyer (my Dad), had given his life in WWII just before my second birthday, so I never really got to know him. Mom kept going for my sake, but I know she was devastated by his death. In 1949, Rev. Alfred Halsted came to the Allegan Methodist Church, and he and his wife, Florence, took Mom under their wing and became good friends. Alfred and Florence were the ones who introduced Mom and me to Lake Louise and their cabin. Mom loved the lake and their cabin so much that in 1951, when I was eight years old, she had our log cabin built next to theirs. She patterned it after their cabin, with the main floor being one big room with windows all across the front and around the sides, a big fieldstone fireplace in the middle, and the upstairs one big room with beds. Her name at that time was Thelma (Begeman) Meyer. Lake Louise was exactly what we needed in our lives.

Lake Louise was my summer home for most of my growing up years, and it is indeed deeply embedded in my soul. Mom's parents, Bernard and Pearl Begeman, her brothers and their wives, Clare and Elsie Begeman and Keith and Bernice Begeman, and nieces and nephews, Donna (Begeman) and Al Gackowski, Duane, Gary and Rod Begeman all spent many happy times at the lake. Although, beside myself, only one Aunt and three cousins remain, we all have wonderful memories of our vacations at the lake. Rod's widow, Joan, and their daughter Ann still rent a cabin there every summer. Ann and Justin Davidhizar were married in the little Chapel in 2008.

Memories include bonfires on the beach, lying on our backs on the dock at night watching the Northern Lights, hearing the echo of our voices over the water, hiking in the woods, climbing Spirit Mountain, our little red rowboat, fishing with bamboo poles and worms on a hook, looking for Petoskey stones, frogs and other pretty stones on the beach, and, of course, swimming.

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At night, or when it rained, we played board games or card games. I remember going on walks around the lake, meeting and greeting others along the way, and just having fun with family, or a friend we brought along. Friends and relatives were always welcome. At least once I remember taking Uncle Alfred and Aunt Florence's dog, Rickey, with us, when they weren't going to be there. Mom was not a dog-in-the-house person, but Rickey was such a good one and loved being at the lake so much, that she relented and let me take him along.

Each trip into Boyne Falls for groceries included a stop at the spring by the public fishing site to fill up our glass gallon jugs with drinking water, as the water at our cabin came through a garden hose from the lake. In the early years, I remember that if it rained we had to leave our car at the top of the hill going down to the cabins, because if it was wet we couldn't get back until it dried. Then, of course we had to carry everything from the car down to the cabin. I always said my long arms were a result of carrying a jug of water in each hand down that hill! Bigger trips were to Boyne City. At least one trip to Petoskey over the summer was extra special!

On Sunday mornings we always attended the worship service in the Chapel at the camp. That was a highlight as we became acquainted with others around the lake that we didn't see during the week. As I got older, I remember singing in the choir with other kids from around the lake. Folks across the lake thought their side was nicer than our side, but we thought our side was nicer because we could look at Spirit Mountain every day, with all of its wonderful "moods". In 1960, just before my senior year in high school, we both were able to actually attend the camp, Mom as the Camp Nurse and I as a camper. Even though we were quite familiar with it, we had never lived in a district that went there to camp, and we loved it!

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After my marriage to Allan Ketchum early in 1967, we spent several summer weekends at the lake. Then the following spring we moved to Oregon. Although I have visited home on several occasions, I have only been able to revisit Lake Louise once while Mom was still there. I brought my two daughters, seven year old Kristi and ten month old Keri in 1977. Unfortunately, Kelli has not been there.

My last visit to Lake Louise was in 1998 when Allan and I brought Mom's ashes home to be placed in the memorial garden, and, together with Ted, Marcy and Carolyn Halsted, had a short Memorial Service by Strong Chapel. Her name is on the plaque inside the Chapel. The Englands, who owned "our" cabin by then, were so gracious as to interrupt their vacation to allow us to stay there that weekend. Allan had also fallen in love with Lake Louise that summer so long ago. We had a wonderful time reminiscing, doing some hiking and paddling around the lake, and were grateful to be able to bring Mom to her chosen resting place.