

NOT SO VERY LONG AGO

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For me, Castle Park in the years 1936 - 1942 was a Never, Never Land, in which, like Peter Pan and Wendy, I was young and never thought much about growing up. Of course, I, like all my peers in the group now labeled the "Old Timers," was growing up, and the real world would overtake us soon in the violent, ugly form of World War II. This World War II generation was a large cohort -- lively, full of fun, adventure-some, and not above a few pranks, which seemed slightly wicked at the time, but now appear rather harmless and innocent.

The people I recall from those days can be divided into several groups: the Castle Park girls, the Castle Park boys, the group who were a little bit older or a little bit younger than the group now entering their seventh decade, and of course, the Castle waiters, those romantic young men, mostly from southern colleges and universities with a few from Hope College.

The Castle Park girls of our era were: Dilly Keeler, Jody Muzzy, Patsy Cleveland, Harriet ("Hat") Moore, Bebe and Mary Goelitz, and Betty Jean McLean. A little bit older, but still part of the group when they were in Castle Park, were Willie Leach, Dede Barber, and Linda Sherer. Marilyn Goelitz, Kathie Clark, and Marilyn Frye were slightly younger than the other "Old Timers." A girl named Patty Child was also a member of the group for several summers when her family rented a cottage.

The Castle Park boys included Phil Frye, Bob Gielow, Bud George, Carter Wilkie Brown, Jim Robertson, Arnold Moore ("Hat's" brother) and Bert Miller, a relative of the Carter Browns. Two other Castle Park boys,

who have not been back to Castle Park for many years, were two lanky brothers, Joe and Willie McConaughy, noted for their sense of humor and tall tales. Their family's cottage was between the Butler's cottage (now the Bellis cottage) and the Carter cottage (now Dick and Sue Muzzy's). Later the McConaughy cottage became part of the Carter cottage. A little bit older with the awesome stature of being "college men" when we were still in high school were John Needham, Bud Sherer, R.J. Abel (a cousin of Bud's), and Chuck and Baxter McLean. A little younger than the other Castle Park boys were Dick Steketee, Dick Muzzy, and Minor ("Mike") Keeler.

Several different young men rotated as Castle waiters through those pre-World War II years. Several of them, who were from the South, had wonderful names reminiscent of Civil War history and of the then best selling novel, "Gone With The Wind". I remember some of the names: Algae Fleming, Ruddy Craven, Archie Ravenal, "Hoos" Crozier and of course, our own Morgan Hall. The one good Dutch name that will be remembered by all of us "Old Timers" is Ed Heneveld, then a student at Hope College. When I use the term Castle Park "boys" and call the waiters "men", no disrespect is intended. The first three summers I was at Castle Park, my contemporaries and I were still in high school, or in some cases, boarding school, while the Castle Park waiters had crossed the great divide into college.

My family, the John Davis Hibbard family, arrived in Castle Park for the first time in the summer of 1936; the summer I celebrated my sixteenth birthday. My mother, Margaret (Cook) Hibbard and father, John Davis (called "Jack") had planned to rent a cottage that summer at Michilinda,

a resort north of Muskegon on a high bluff overlooking both Lake Michigan and White Lake, but there had been some problem with the arrangement. My parents then recalled another resort near Holland-Castle Park which they had heard about from good friends, the Gray Muzzys, the Eugene Steketees, and the Minor Keelers, Sr. Eugene Steketee and Gray Muzzy had been friends of my father's at the University of Michigan. Something many Castle Parkers don't realize is that my mother and father both grew up in Chicago, but chose to live in a smaller community. The Sanford Wilcoxes were also close friends of my father and mother's; they began coming to Castle Park a few seasons later.

My mother recalls that she and my father drove to Castle Park in the late spring of 1936 to see about renting the Luther Barber's cottage, now Rennie and Bebe Blossom's. When my mother and father arrived at the front door of the cottage, Mrs. Barber received them cordially, but looked somewhat surprised when they introduced themselves. My father, who had an excellent memory for faces and names, exclaimed, "Dorothy Farwell!" It turned out that my parents had known her in what I have always thought of as the "old Chicago days". From that summer on, our family or some members of the family, consisting of my parents and four children - Mary, Peggy (Margaret), John and me, have been at Castle Park until the present - fifty-five years.

The next few summers my parents rented the big Jordan cottage, now greatly modernized by the present owners, Kathie and Don Fochtman. The summer of 1942, the year I graduated from college, we did not spend all summer at Castle Park because of the war, but we did rent the Brown Mantle cottage, now owned by Greer and Gray Lerchen, at the end of the

summer season. After I joined the American Red Cross in the summer of 1943, my family began to rent Mrs. Vera Dargan's cottage, whimsically named "The House at Pooh Corner". Completely remodeled, this is the cottage now owned by Peg and Bob Steketee.

Mrs. Dargan was the witty, irrespressible widow of Professor Dargan, formerly chairman of the French Department of the University of Chicago. She was herself bi-lingual as she had been an English woman brought up on the southern coast of France. When my husband and I returned to Castle Park with our five children, we rented the cottage for 13 years. Whenever I talked on the telephone placed on an old-fashioned mahogany secretary, I could gaze on Dr. Dargan's massive "History of French Literature" displayed in the bookcase above the desk.

In the earlier days between 1936 and 1942 when I lived in that Never, Never Land, called Castle Park, I can now see that the Castle was like a big family camp with many activities, opportunities for making friends and acquiring skills. I can now understand how Castle Park influenced me in so many ways -- in my adult friends, in my interests, and in my choices in my latter life.

In this period, Carter Brown was the driving force at the heart of the resort. He was the host of the Castle, then an inn attracting families from many different areas: Chicago, Louisville, Indianapolis, and many other cities. In those days, when our country was still in the midst of a Depression or gradually recovering from the Depression, families did not fly to Europe or take leisurely driving trips to the Rocky Mountains. They went to famous inns in resort areas and stayed awhile -- two weeks, a month, a whole summer. Mrs. Brown was a cordial

hostess for many guests, many of them friends who had stayed with the Browns at their Pinecrest Inn in North Carolina or who lived in Tryon.

In those early days, Carter Brown was the motivating force behind the horseback riding and the annual horse shows, for which he and Castle Park were justly famous. He brought his thoroughbred horses up north from Tryon for the summer, and I had the opportunity to ride more spirited horses than the saddle horses at a stable in Grand Rapids, where a group of young people, including my future husband, Henry Idema, and David Amberg gathered on Saturdays to ride and to have outdoor cook-outs.

Aside from his many other responsibilities - designing and building some of the Castle Park cottages and overseeing the Castle grounds - Mr. Brown was, in a sense, Recreation Director. He encouraged the Castle Park baseball team, organized the dances and built the dance floor on the dune, and cheered us on if we were playing tennis matches or riding in the horse show at the end of the summer.

For my contemporaries, the days and evenings were busy, boisterous, and somewhat magical. As an activity, tennis was one of my first loves. I had never had formal coaching, but in Grand Rapids a young man named Al Veenboer, whose family had one of the early tennis courts in the city, got a bunch of young teen-agers together and coached them. In a day when many boys were not thrilled to play with mere girls, he taught us how to play mixed doubles. And, so I discovered tennis -- and boys. Al later became the tennis instructor of a well known resort in Arizona. Several of the boys he coached became top flight high school and college tennis players. As for me, I started coming to Castle Park, where I

could play tennis as often as I wanted.

At Castle Park, mostly in the afternoons when waiters were off duty, we played with old tennis racquets on clay courts, which I thought were the best courts in the world even though it took them a long time to dry. With no coaching, we played singles and doubles by the hour. I can remember playing with Morgan Hall, and occasionally, a group of young men from Holland. Bill Arendshorst, who later became an eye doctor, was one of the Holland contingent. He still plays on Wednesday afternoons with the men's group organized by Ken Roose and Henry Maentz.

Although we all still had a lot to learn about tennis, we organized some mild competitions among Castle Parkers and sometimes with individuals outside the park.

I can remember playing a singles match with a Mrs. Arnold, the wife of a retired army officer, who had a cottage on Black Lake (before it was given the more elegant name of Lake Macatawa). I can remember that Mr. Brown, as well as my mother, came out to watch the match. I lost. Well, as I said, we all had a lot to learn.

The glorious broad beach was a big part of our young lives. Everyone, young and old, gathered on what we now call the Castle Beach. I do not remember that we had a south beach or a north beach in those early days. A few Castle Parkers with beach front cottages must have used the beaches in front of their cottages, but most of the young people and the families with cottages on the campus surrounding the Castle trundled to the Castle Beach with small children, beach umbrellas, beach towels and sand toys. Perhaps one reason I can't recall the other beaches is that in the late thirties the Gray Muzzys' and Willa Langdon's cottages

had not been built to the north, and South Hill was still a wooded dune before cottages were built in that choice location.

Everyone, young and old, spent long afternoons on the beach, but often the mothers trudged back with small children for baths and dinner while our teen-age group would linger on to talk, tell jokes, to banter with one another as the hot sun, slipping down in the west, cast a golden glow on the water. Then, finally, we dipped in Lake Michigan for the last swim of the day.

We were not always lazy on these summer afternoons, as we often played tennis or worked on our Senior Lifesaving tests. Jerry Breen, the play class director and a superb leader, would take a few of us at a time to the raft placed just over our heads in the deep water. Diving off the raft, we practiced the various holds for rescuing a drowning person. I used to pray that I would never have to use my knowledge; it was difficult enough to practice the head hold or the shoulder hold on a friend who clutched too tightly and drew me under the water.

One of the final tests we had to pass was to jump off the raft with our clothes on over our bathing suits, and then take the clothes off in the water and swim back to the raft or in to shore. For the test, I wore a long, green cotton dress buttoned at the neck. When I jumped off the raft, the dress floated up over my face. I couldn't get the buttons unbuttoned, and worst of all, I couldn't breathe. I can't remember whether it was Jerry Breen or one of my fellow neophytes who came to my rescue and pulled me out of the water. I did, finally, pass all the tests for my Senior Lifesaving certificate, but I resolved never to get a job as a lifeguard!

Baseball was a popular activity at Castle Park, and it was taken seriously. Phil Frye was the captain and prime mover of the team, comprised of all the Castle Park "boys" and most of the waiters. For some reason, I remember particularly Ed Heneveld, Phil, Rennie Blossom and Bud George as being the backbone of the team. The Castle Park "girls" and the mothers, fathers, grandmothers, and younger brothers and sisters of the players comprised the cheering section.

The team played equally lively, and competitive teams from all the nearby resorts and at least one town - Macatawa, Ottawa Beach, Douglas, and nearby Graafschap - on a regular summerlong schedule. One remark of Phil Frye's sticks in my mind. "The Ottawa Beach team is made up of Idema, Idema and Smith." (Note: three Idema families headed by Chester, Walter, and Edward with ten children between them, had cottages side-by-side at Ottawa Beach when it was a fashionable resort before the nearby state park was built. My husband was the son of Edward and Mary Idema, called Polly.)

Sometimes, although never in the major resort league baseball games, the girls joined in an informal baseball game. The summer when I turned eighteen - the summer before I went to college - I twisted my knee in one of these games when Bert Miller ran into me on one of the bases. I believe I was playing first base. Anyway, I felt heroic the rest of the summer with an ace bandage, more or less white, on my left knee and crutches near at hand.

Horseback riding was an important part of the summer activities for several of us in those long ago summers. I particularly remember that Jody Muzzy and I rode in our tailored riding clothes and more or less

polished boots. Patsy Cleveland had her own horse, a small, swift creature who galloped like the wind without prodding from her rider. Jody and I both rode Mr. Brown's horses. They were elegant creatures with impressive lineages, but they were accustomed to more experienced riders than I was at the time -- or ever.

Usually accompanied by a groom, a small group of us could ride on trails through the woods to Macatawa or going south, ride as far as Goshorn Lake through the woods at the back of the shifting dunes. Sixty-sixth Street was not paved, and we could ride for a long distance on this lonely road and see only one or two farm houses. When we rode on this road instead of on the trails through the woods, we could gallop past ominous looking Gilligan Lake. Gilligan was a foreboding, mysterious lake with a grapevine on which swimmers could swing out and plunge into the water. Swimming in the lake was a taboo for me because my family had heard that a boy had drowned there when he dropped into the murky water from the grapevine swing.

I remember one particular evening when a group of us rode our horses to Goshorn Lake for an outdoor cook-out on the dune. After dinner, seated around the campfire, we watched the sun go down in a glorious Lake Michigan sunset. Later, more quiet than usual, we rode home just as the stars were coming out and the moon was rising.

The exciting climax of the riding season at Castle Park was the Castle Park horse show. The day of the horse show had an aura of adventure and the unknown. The horse show was always the third week of August, and it heralded the beginning of the end of the precious summer. On the day of the horse show, everyone in the Park awoke early after

praying for a good day the night before.

As we got older, in our late teens, we had assignments to help with the show under the direction of Carter Brown: to help give out ribbons, or for the boys, to help set up the jumps and reset them if they were knocked over in an event. Mr. Brown was everywhere, making sure that everything was in order. I remember one particular year when Arnold Moore, tall for his age, was the ringmaster, properly attired in coat and tie and tweed jacket.

Some of the horses from a good distance away, like Metamora near Detroit, had come in the night before, but many other horses were arriving early in the morning in their horse trailers pulled by a truck or occasionally, their owners' cars. The handsome English hunters, black, chestnut, bay, were saddled in the stable yard behind the Castle. Their young riders or an occasional parent or groom would lead them to the corral near the riding ring, which was set up on the main campus on the baseball diamond.

Many excellent riders participated regularly in the Castle Park horse shows, but I remember particularly two riders from the Holland area: Peggy Kirchen, whose family were good friends of my future husband's family at Ottawa Beach, sat her horse, always a spirited but well-schooled animal, with perfect ease. In her stylish black riding coat and hat, with her hands quiet on the reins and her chiseled face composed, she and her horse seemed to float over the jumps. P.T. Cheff, who in recent years set up a riding program for handicapped children, was also an excellent rider. A big man, he rode powerfully built horses and was a perennial recipient of blue ribbons, particularly in the outside

steeplechase event.

This final event was a stirring climax to the day. Jumps were set up not only on the central campus, but also in the large field where the swimming pool is now. The whole course simulated the conditions of a fox hunt with various kinds of difficult jumps and hazards. In addition to individuals riding over the course in a final spectacular event, participants would ride their horses three abreast. As a spectator, my heart was always pounding and my throat was dry as we watched this display of horsemanship. Not many times that I can remember, but a few times, when a horse balked, a rider had a hard fall.

Many of the participants in the horse show stayed for dinner at the Castle followed by one of the most festive dances of the season. The fire in the outside stone fireplace at the dance dune was always blazing, and the stars seemed very close and friendly while we danced the traditional dance steps - the fox trot and the waltz. The jitter-bug was on the horizon in those pre-war years, but it had not yet invaded Castle Park. However, the Big Apple, led by Morgan Hall, was a well-received variation of the traditional dance steps.

My mother, Margaret Hibbard, was probably the one person in Castle Park who dreaded these horse shows. She was always sure someone would fall from a horse. As she said, "I hate to see people hurt." Our cottage next to the Nobels overlooked the ring, but one year my mother busied herself in the kitchen and refused to spend more than a few minutes at the ringside.

Another year, I wished my mother - and father, too - had loitered in the cottage. Instead, they were very present in the proverbial ringside

seats. I was going to enter one of the horse show events for inexperienced riders beginning to jump. Mr. Brown had been schooling me to take relatively low jumps in the stable yard, and I felt I was ready to try my luck.

However, I was not ready to handle the particular horse I tried to ride that day.

The horse, a satiny black stallion with flaring red nostrils and wild, rolling eyes lived up to his name: Goblin. He was a demon incarnate. I was apprehensive when I mounted him as he had a habit of throwing his head back and prancing. I was very nervous as we entered the ring. Then came the moment of truth. Holding the reins more tightly than I should, and with a light touch of my heels on his glossy hide, I urged Goblin into a canter straight for the first jump. Then, tossing his head high, he stopped at the edge of the jump, and I nearly went over his head.

In accordance with horse show rules, I had another chance to urge Goblin to take the first jump. Hands perspiring, I managed to turn the horse around and approached the jump again. This time, he veered to the side of the jump, threw up his head and I slipped off. Day of infamy!

Embarrassed and nearly in tears, I left the ring, and Mr. Brown asked Carter Wilkie Brown to ride the horse. (It is an important part of training not to let a horse refuse a jump completely.) Although Carter Wilkie was an accomplished rider, he, too, had difficulty with Goblin, but as a remember, he did get him to take a jump or two. Later, I heard that in Tryon, North Carolina, where the horses went in the winter, this magnificent, but difficult, horse was considered an outlaw, and I

am afraid he was shot. I was saddened. Even though he was my nemesis, he had heart and fire, and more than more docile creatures, he is etched in my memory forever.

Even in Castle Park, our little paradise, the rain occasionally fell, washing out the planned baseball games and turning the tennis courts into slippery pools of mud. Then we went indoors with our round of activities. A group of the Castle Park boys and some of the girls, particularly Bebe Goelitz and Marilyn Frye, gathered at the Frye's cottage these rainy days to listen to records. (The Frye family rented the Castle cottage immediately to the west of the Castle, and Mrs. Henry Goelitz, paternal grandmother of the four Goelitz children, lived in the Castle cottage between the Fries and the Sherers (now the Kernihan cottage).

Phil Frye had a large collection of all the hit songs of the swing era, not only the recordings of the big bands, but also of the popular singing groups like the Mills Brothers and the Ink Spots. Songs like "Polka Dots and Moon Beams", "Old Buttermilk Skies", "Tangerine", and "Moonlight Serenade" still stir the blood. Sometimes in the afternoons when we could not be at the beach, our resident pianist, Rennie Blossom, played his own version of these songs on the piano in the band shell at the dance dune.

I remember one particular rainy afternoon when the spirit moved Willie Leach to invite me to come to her cottage and bake a cake. I was not known for my cooking prowess, in fact, was not allowed often in my own mother's kitchen, but for whatever reason, baking this cake became something I felt compelled to do. All I can remember is throwing together

ingredients - I'm not even sure we used a recipe - and the flour splattered all over the kitchen. I think the cake burned. I was never again invited into the Leach's kitchen. I comforted myself by remembering that King Alfred the Great, according to an old story, managed to burn the cakes while he sat by the fire and mused.

The long summer evenings brought a different round of activities than the day's athletic events. Dances were scheduled faithfully two nights a week, Tuesdays and Saturdays. In the early thirties, dances were held in the Castle, but by the time our family came to Castle Park, they were beginning to be held on the dance dune, one of the many improvements and projects of Carter Brown. Everyone, young and old, came to the dances. Those evenings of the dances seemed very romantic with a fire crackling in the stone fireplace and the stars and the moon very bright above us.

Most of the cottagers ate dinner at the Castle at least one or two nights a week. In the early years they joined the hotel guests in the airy dining room off the lobby, and later cottagers dined in the newly opened, attractive "Old Timers Room" with its big fireplace and collection of antiques, bright copper kettles and brass candlesticks, most of them from North Carolina. It was always of special interest to me to see which of my friends would be waiting on our table, and I knew that later in the evening we would all be meeting again.

Fish fries at the dance dune on Friday nights also attracted not only Castle guests, but also cottagers. From one of those nights I remember Marian Brown starting the after-dinner singing with "You Wore A Tulip, A Bright Yellow Tulip And I Wore A Red, Red Rose". I can't remember if it was at one of these fish fries or at any early Castle Capers

that I first heard Mrs. Caroline Costen render her famous Arkansas ballad, "Little Brown Church In The Wildhood".

On Sunday evenings, vesper servies in the meeting house attracted most of the Castle Park families. If not exactly a mandate from parents, it was at least a strong suggestion that all the children in the family attend vespers with their parents. Someone from Holland, perhaps connected with the choir of one of the churches, would play Mrs. Brown's old piano, and the hymns were old favorites like the resounding "Faith Of Our Fathers" and the plaintive closing hymn, "Now The Day Is Over". The ministers came from various nearby churches, and Castle Park also had its share of ordained ministers, like Dr. Carr, Kathie Clark's and David Carr's father, and dedicated individuals like Morgan Hall, who could lead the services.

On the nights when no activities were scheduled, the parents of the Old Timers and other cottagers were very hospitable and welcomed us for an evening of games and just plain talking. When Bud and Linda Sherer were in residence, Mr. and Mrs. Sherer always welcomed the Castle waiters for poker or other card games. Morgan Hall often played bridge with my father and mother.

I can remember gathering in big groups at the Moores' cottage (now Helen Heneveld's) and at the James McLean's cottage (now Bob Beatty's). The most favored game was charades, a game the Old Timers continue to play at least at one gathering through many subsequent summers when they were themselves the parents of growing families.

When we were very young, I can remember at least one evening when we played Spin the Milk Bottle; when the milk bottle stopped spinning,

the winner was the person the bottle pointed to. He or she was then allowed to kiss the maiden or young man of choice. The game was a total disaster because the boy you wanted to have kiss you never did, and the girls were too shy to play the game without blushing.

Ghost stories were another diversion. Everyone had a story about the ghost who haunted the tower of the Castle. In addition, I was always intrigued by Miss May Godfrey's cottage standing alone on the hill. (The cottage now belongs to Betty and Carl Hedblom). I don't believe Miss Godfrey was a member of the Castle Park Association, or at least she did not mingle with other Castle Parkers. My father and mother had warned me specifically not to trespass on her property. The warning helped to create an air of mystery, and at least once on a dusky evening, I walked as near to the forbidding house as I dared.

When I was married, my father-in-law, Edward Idema, who had wonderful stories about old Grand Rapids and his own boyhood at Macatawa, told me that Miss Godfrey, an heir to an old lumber fortune, had been very interested in spiritualism, and she and her guests had, indeed, called forth the spirits in seances in the aloof house of the hill.

Sometimes during the summer evenings, we had beach fires usually near Baldy. I remember two nights in particular. One was my birthday, July 25, 1938, when I was eighteen years old. Since I was swathed in ace bandages for a twisted knee, I can't remember how I managed to hobble down to Baldy, but I did, and I have recalled that particular evening because we all sang and told stories.

Another evening, we built a fire even farther down the beach on a stretch of sand near the author Paul DeKrief's cottage. On our beach

walks in the daytime, we could barely see his cottage in the shade of giant oaks and pines on a high bluff. However, I was intrigued by a separate studio in plain view, where the writer worked on his books. His book "The Microbe Hunters" had been well-received and was on high school reading lists. I also knew that Sinclair Lewis, who had collaborated with Paul DeKrief on the novel "Arrowsmith", the story of a young doctor, was a frequent visitor, and I hoped to catch a glimpse of the popular author.

Anyway, on this particular night we found that we had forgotten the can opener for the inevitable Coca-Colas and beer. Since everyone knew I was hoping to meet Mr. DeKruif, they dared me to climb to his cottage and borrow a can opener.

I accepted the dare, and with a good deal of trepidation, I climbed the stairs from the beach and knocked at the door of the main house. By now it was about ten o'clock. After quite a pause, a big man with a barrel chest and clad in pink pajamas (honest, they were PINK), came to the door. When I told him what I wanted, he was furious, but he did go to the kitchen and found an old can opener. He opened the door a crack wider and, reluctantly jabbed the can opener into my perspiring hand. "Keep it and don't come back," he roared.

When I got back to the beach fire, everyone asked me how Mr. De Krief had responded. I didn't want to confess that he acted as any sensible man who had gone to bed and been aroused by a brash, young girl at a late hour would have responded. So, I didn't tell them a thing. Incidentally, I never did catch a glimpse of the red-headed Sinclair Lewis when he visited Mr. DeKrief, but strangely enough, I wrote about Lewis's books in my senior thesis at college.

On some evenings we did go out of the park, and occasionally some of us visited other nearby resorts. I dimly remember going to a dance at the Macatawa Beach Hotel, which was the epitome of elegant resort hotels in the 1920's, but was now in the 1930's, showing its age. I also remember going to a dance at the Waukazoo Inn, a center of activity in the Waukazoo resort area on the north side of Lake Macatawa.

Some of us had friends in these other nearby resorts. With a son on the Macatawa baseball team and in our age group, a very glamorous blonde daughter, Mary, the Martindales, a family from Lansing, were very hospitable to young people. Near Waukazoo, the Dwight family, headed by a widowed but strong and cordial mother with three teen-age sons, made their boathouse into a place where young people could gather.

In this era of the famous dance halls, the Red Barn in Saugatuck was the foremost attraction for a so-called "big evening". Although our parents worried about our driving the family cars over the pitted, unpredictable old road to Saugatuck, we were occasionally allowed, usually in a group, to go to the Red Barn to dance to the music of one of the big bands. I particularly recall an evening when Duke Ellington's band with its charismatic leader was playing. Adding to the glamor of an evening at the Red Barn, was a huge crystal ball in the ceiling; it seemed to me that its constantly changing colors matched the various moods of the music.

Did we sometimes get into scrapes? Not often, but every once in a while.

One night a group chartered a boat in Saugatuck to take them out in Lake Michigan. I was not allowed to go on the grounds of my wounded

knee. (I had a hard time following the logic of my parents' decision.) Anyway, some of the group did go. A violent wind came up with increasingly big breakers. The trip proved to be both hazardous and wet.

In the meantime, I had my own little adventure. Since we were allowed to use my family's car that evening, Fred Albrecht, one of the waiters, and I decided to explore the grounds of a huge brick house on the road to Saugatuck, which like May Godfrey's house, had an air of mystery. This mansion became an Augustinian Monastery and still later, was part of a minimum security prison. At this time, 1938, the house with its well kept lawns and shubbery was owned by a man from Chicago, who had been prominent in the jewelry business.

We drove in the gate and took a winding road some distance from the house and leading to the beach. Just as we got close to the beach, the motor of the car sputtered, and we came to a dead standstill. Because I couldn't walk that far, Fred walked up to the big house while I sat in the dark wondering if there were any bears around. And worse, since it was getting late, I was also wondering what my father and mother would say when I got home.

After what seemed like a long time, a large car rolled up with a nice looking "older man" at the wheel. (Older was anyone over thirty.) Fred was sitting beside our rescuer. I hated facing the owner of the house, but he was very kind and he had a twinkle in his eye as he said, pointing to a tree near the car, "You could have called me on the telephone." He had installed a telephone at the end of the road as so many other people had done exactly what we did and had gotten stuck for one reason or another.

Fred and the kind owner of the big house worked a little magic

under the hood of the car, and after a few minutes the motor started. We arrived back at the Castle late but not too late, "too" being after midnight. We were full of good resolutions - never, never, never, never to trespass again.

One other prank I remember was more serious. In a farmer's field at the northeast corner of 66th and 146th Streets, a beautiful crop of cantalopes (my mother called them "Herkimer Melons") was ripening. In those days, Mr. Jim DePree, a huckster, brought produce for sale into the Castle on an old truck. Since we all had fruit and vegetables in abundance, we were not hungry, just mischievous and unthinking. On a dare some of us went over to the field on a moonlit night and stole a few of the precious melons. This time we had gone too far. My father, seldom stern but now upset, and Mr. Muzzy ordered us to take the melons back and to apologize to the owner of the farm. Instead of eating the melons, we ate "humble pie" as the old saying goes.

Shortly after this episode, my father and mother suggested that I spend an evening at home "doing something worthwhile like reading a book." Although I loved to read and had brought a stack of books to the cottage, I did not enjoy sitting inside and reading when I could hear the voices of my friends on their way to a beach party.

It was the longest evening of the summer.

In the summer of 1941, life began to change for many of us. Although Pearl Harbor was yet to come, no one, young or old, could ignore the threatening headlines coming out of Europe. At college (Vassar), I had become very involved as one of the managing editors of the college newspaper and was beginning to aspire to a career in journalism. That

summer I wanted to get a job on a newspaper, and I did manage to get a job as a cub reporter in the city room on the "Port Huron Times-Herald". It was an invaluable experience, but I missed Castle Park. I could only come back to the Park on the dusty, antiquated Grand Trunk Railroad every other weekend; a big change from the carefree summer days of the past few years.

The following summer of 1942 my parents decided not to rent a cottage at Castle Park for the entire summer because of the war and the threatened gasoline shortage. I had now graduated from college and was beginning to work as a reporter for "The Grand Rapids Herald", and my two sisters and my brother had other plans. I believe they went to camps. However, we all missed Castle Park and our friends. On the spur of the moment my parents were able to rent the Brown Mantle cottage, now Gray and Greer Lerchen's. For the first time in our years at Castle Park, we even stayed a few days after Labor Day. I particularly remember those precious September days because, as it turned out, they would be the last days I was really in residence at Castle Park for a decade with the exception of one brief overnight visit at my family's.

I don't know if Mr. Brown did this every year, or if it was a special event for September, 1942. Anyway, he planned a big cookout on the rolling dunes behind Green Mountain. Everyone still at Castle Park, mostly the older generation because families with younger children had left for the starting of schools, were invited to the noon picnic. Some caught rides in Castle vehicles or in their own cars, but many of us hiked up the beach and climbed over the dune on one of those golden days of the end of summer.

I have a mental picture of our sitting around and devouring steaks, corn, potato salad, cole slaw and then singing before hiking back to the Park. From that day I particularly remember the presence of Mrs. Nobel (Mary), Mr. and Mrs. Sherer (Bert and Linda), and Mrs. Leach (Wilhelmina). Mr. Sherer, Mrs. Leach, and Mrs. Nobel composed the regular morning walking group as they gathered every morning for a walk to Halfway Creek. After the picnic lunch, Mrs. Nobel, an avid naturalist, pointed out and gave names to some of the plants and trees around us. The reason I remember this day so well is because looking back at it later, it marked the end of my enchanted Never, Never Land and the beginning of a new era. Perhaps the new era can be called "real life" or adulthood. The three summers after this summer of 1942, I was in the American Red Cross in Washington for training in 1943, and later in Europe. The first few summers of my married life, we either stayed in Grand Rapids or rented a huge old cottage at Ottawa Beach, which belonged to cousins of my husband.

With five children, we returned to Castle Park in 1957 and stayed in Vera Dargan's cottage, which my family had rented for several years until they bought their present cottage. Now history began to repeat itself. Our family - Hank and I and our five children - were in Mrs. Dargan's cottage for the next thirteen summers. Now our children were living in that wonderful Never, Never Land of Castle Park as they played tennis, rode horseback or walked the beach.

I caught myself repeating the same warnings my mother had given me, "Don't go too far out in the water," or "Hang up your bathing suit," and

later, "drive carefully." Most of the Old Timers were still around or at least put in an appearance at some time in the summer. For many years, we had a potluck dinner once a summer and the entertainment of the evening was - you guessed it - a wild game of charades.