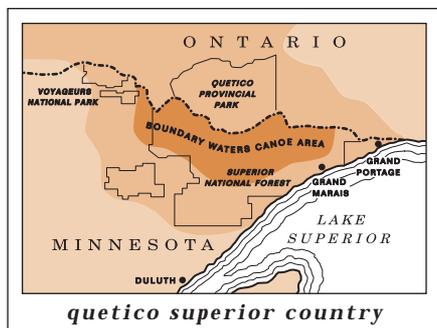


# Wilderness News

FROM THE QUETICO SUPERIOR FOUNDATION SUMMER 2011



*The Quetico Superior Foundation, established in 1946, encourages and supports the protection of the ecological, cultural and historical resources of the Quetico-Superior region.*

*Nature is the ultimate humbler; both of persons and civilizations. It can be destroyed by greed, but it never flatters the greedy; it can, for a time, be made the domain of elites, but it outlives them; it can be temporarily overpowered, but never, except at the peril of all, overwhelmed. On the other hand, nature shows its bountiful blessings upon the mighty and meek in equal proportion. The howl of a wolf, the cry of a loon, the lap of clean water against an untrammelled shore constitute the only common currency; to defend them is to labor in the most elementary way for the general good.*

– Paul Gruchow,  
*Boundary Waters, The Grace of the Wild*

## Wilderness News

Published by the Quetico Superior Foundation

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Chik-Wauk Lodge, 1936. Photo courtesy of USDA-Superior National Forest Collection.

## Chik-Wauk Museum and Nature Center

By Rob Kesselring

Take a drive to the end of the Gunflint Trail and spend a few hours at Chik-Wauk Museum, the word serendipity will come to mind. Could there be a better place for a museum and nature center that celebrates the human and natural history of the Quetico Superior Wilderness than at the end of the Gunflint Trail? And what good luck that so many different biomes are represented on the museum grounds that even wheelchair-bound visitors can experience a breadth of biodiversity traveling two of the six carefully maintained trails!

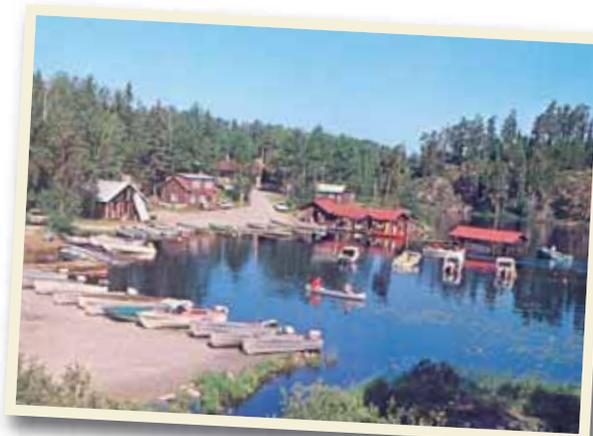
Chik-Wauk was originally a fishing lodge, but although many lodges were built in Northeast Minnesota, few took on aboriginal names. Chik-Wauk was an attempt to adopt the Ojibway name for white or possibly jack pine. This respectful gesture by the old lodge founders has appropriately become the name for the new museum.

But, Chik-Wauk's history, like many initiatives in the wilderness of the border lake country, was a bit of a bumpy road. After a couple years of housing summer fishermen in a campy lodge built on the edge of the Gunflint Trail, Ed Nunstedt built a fine wooden building with a stone porch at the present site in 1932. But on May 19th of 1933 before even the first guest arrived, a pet dog knocked over a

kerosene lamp and the lodge burned to the ground. Only the stone porch was left standing. The lodge was rebuilt again, this time entirely of granite so it wouldn't burn again and providentially because several Duluth stonemasons, unemployed by the Depression, jumped at the chance for work in exchange for room and board. Had it been rebuilt of logs it likely would have been moved after the Wilderness Act, or burned, or would have deteriorated beyond repair. But the stone structure, like the Canadian Shield which it celebrates, endures.

There are more serendipitous events. Situated at the end of the Gunflint on Saganaga Lake, Chik-Wauk Lodge was historically a gathering place for residents on both sides of the international border. It was the place local Canadians and Americans bought groceries, picked up their parcels, and mailed letters. Although they might have come from different countries it was at Chik-Wauk where

*continued on page 2*



1960's postcard of Chik-Wauk resort, courtesy of Sue Kerfoot.



Chik-Wauk Museum history displays. Photos by Rob Kesselring

they shared the stories of their lives in the wilderness. When talking to their neighbors, however distant, about issues with bears, storms and ice they experienced that reassuring feeling of—“What, you too?” Chik-Wauk was their link to civilization and to each other. And today, it appropriately stands as a link to the past. This history of common experience and sense of community has been renewed and strengthened by the residents of the Gunflint Trail in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, and with donations from Canadian neighbors who have worked hand-in-hand to create a spirit of pride, cooperation and wonder that is palpable as you enter the quaint stone building.

It's not as if the museum was built in just an old abandoned building; many threads connect the past to the present. Ralph Griffis, the last owner of Chik-Wauk Lodge and a summer resident until 1998, was dismayed when he learned that the Museum had not replaced the old flagpole. This was remedied in the spring of 2011 when a flagpole was installed in front of the museum. At a time when there is so much concern about international border security the Gunflint Trail Historical Society is considering flying both the stars and stripes and the maple leaf as a reminder of times when travel across borders was more casual. They are soliciting public input on this issue on the Chik-Wauk web site blog at Chikwauk.com.

If you think of a museum as a stuffy institution to which a visit is more endured than enjoyed, you will be surprised at Chik-Wauk. Midwesterners will remember those early and corny television ads for Hamm's Beer. The jingle that stuck in your head, “From the land of sky blue waters” and the accompanying visual of the grizzly bear perched in a canoe was filmed, of course, at Chik-Wauk Lodge. Old beer ads and

memorabilia are unabashedly displayed in the museum along with an interactive exhibit where participants can hoist a voyageur's load on their backs. Panels with information supplied by the Gunflint Historical Society and the Forest Service, and artfully designed by Split Rock Studios, a graphic arts company, grace the walls. Dioramas and murals documenting natural history, prehistoric artifacts and interesting relics from the days of voyageurs, miners, loggers, resorters and canoeists are all packed into the small museum, but remarkably the space seems fresh and not cluttered. In its 2010 inaugural season almost 11,000 visitors passed through the doors of the museum. Ada Igoe, site manager and the only paid employee at Chik-Wauk, will tell you that only on a few rainy days last summer did it ever feel crowded in there! Although the displays, maps and exhibits are comprehensive, artistic and informative, a few other features truly distinguish the museum. Each year there is a temporary exhibit such as, “The construction of the Gunflint Trail.” This changing exhibit helps keep the museum fresh. Also, during the busy season, guest speakers present in what was the main lounge of the lodge on a variety of historical, natural or cultural topics. Behind the fireplace is the main theater with three on-demand films available with a press of a button: *The History of the Gunflint Trail*, *The Voyageurs*, a National Film Board of Canada documentary, and, *Lady of the Gunflint*, a PBS produced Justin Kerfoot documentary.

In two corners of the museum there are touch-screen television monitors, where visitors can select from a wide range of 2-minute movies. One screen concentrates on past and present Gunflint area businesses. The other screen focuses on a list of pioneers and colorful characters of the region.

The Forest Service has not always been welcome at the same table with the local residents. It was, after all, the responsibility of the Forest Service to impose the mandates of the Wilderness Act, mandates that in many ways profoundly changed the lives of these residents. The Chik-Wauk Museum initiative, however, was a cooperative project with members of the Gunflint Trail Historical Society and other local volunteers working and making decisions together with the Forest Service. Many volunteers have helped establish the museum, but past presidents of the Gunflint Trail Historical Society, Betty Hemstad and Sue Kerfoot, and current president, Fred Smith, spearheaded the effort.

Forest Service expertise was crucial in the successful application for Chik-Wauk to be listed on the National Registry of Historic Buildings in 2007. The only other Gunflint Trail building on the Registry is Clearwater Lodge.

Adaptive reuse is a concept the Forest Service brought to the museum. The idea was to modernize the facility for safety and convenience while preserving the character of the time period when the building was constructed and initially utilized. This gives visitors not only information about the past but also a chance to experience the feelings of bygone eras. Many of the visitors in the summer of 2010 were past guests at the Chik-Wauk Lodge, and having the opportunity to recreate old memories is a powerful gift. The Forest Service brought its expertise and support to the project, but the stories and the elbow grease came from the people of the Gunflint. Superior National Forest Archaeologist Lee Johnson calls the development of the museum a fine example of collaboration, cooperation and good fun for a common and positive goal. Visitors will conclude that the partnership has succeeded.

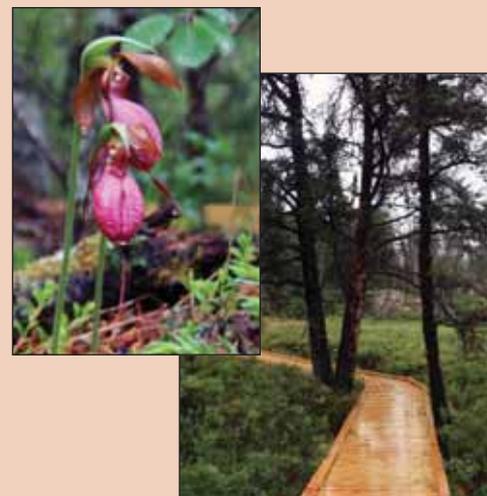
Most of all, if during your exploration of the exhibits you have a question, ask Ada or one of the volunteers. Odds are you will hear a story that will be the highlight of your experience at Chik-Wauk.

## Visiting the Museum

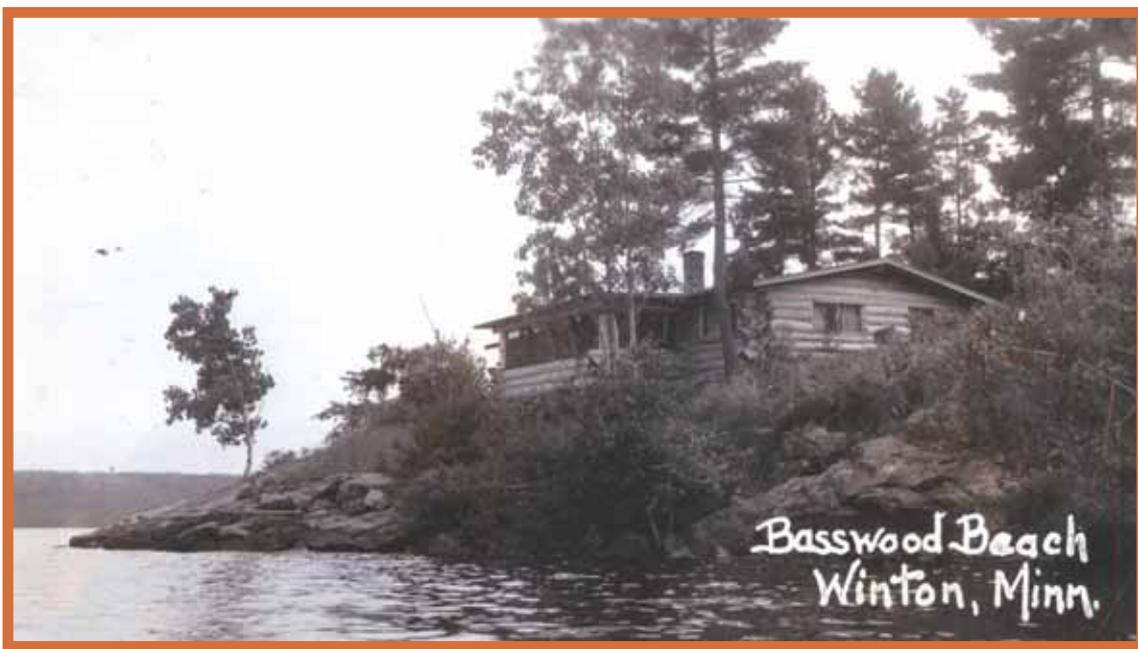
The Chik-Wauk Museum and Nature Center is located just off the east side and almost at the end of the Gunflint Trail on Moose Pond Drive. If you have trouble finding the museum, every resident knows where it is. The building is open from 10:00 to 5:00 seven days a week from Memorial Day weekend to mid-October. Admission to the museum is \$2.00 per person or \$5.00 for a family. The family rate applies to scout, school and church groups. A hiking trail map and a wild-flower guide are available at the main desk for the six nature trails, including the bog boardwalk which birders will enjoy to access otherwise difficult to reach habitat. And, there is a small gift shop in the museum if you need a souvenir as a memento of your visit.



Bear in canoe—Hamm's beer advertisement. Photo by Les Blacklock, courtesy of Sue Kerfoot.



Nature Center bog walk. Photos by of Tim Eaton



Basswood Beach Lodge, 1945.

Remembering a family fishing camp on Basswood Lake, now part of the protected Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness



4-mile portage between Fall Lake and Basswood Lake.

# Basswood Beach Resort and Canoe Trips

By Barbara Wenstrom Shank and William P. Wenstrom

Basswood Beach Resort was located on Basswood Lake, a U.S.-Canadian border lake in extreme northern Minnesota. Basswood Lake is in the heart of the Quetico (Provincial Park)-Superior (National Forest) area that consists of more than two million acres of mostly undeveloped boreal forest.

The Basswood Lake region, beginning with the early fur trades, was a center for Indian settlement, as well as fur trading posts. The early 1900s brought logging operations to the area, with the Four-mile Portage between Fall Lake and Basswood developed to accommodate transporting logs to mills in Winton, MN. The Four-mile Portage along with an ice road on Fall Lake and lower Basswood allowed the Basswood area to be used for summer and winter recreation. The ice road also allowed owners to restock bulky supplies like gasoline and propane in winter. As a result, more than twenty resorts, private cabins and other facilities became established on Basswood Lake beginning as early as the 1930s.

## Basswood Beach: A Well Kept Secret

Nestled between Hubachek's Wilderness Research Station to the south and Basswood Lodge to the north, you would have found Basswood Beach Resort and Canoe Trips operated by Bill and Lillian Wenstrom, lifelong residents of Ely, MN. The Associated Colleges of the Midwest also operated a summer field station featuring ecologically oriented courses on property adjacent to Basswood Beach during the 1960s. Among the historic lodges and other developments of the Quetico-Superior, Basswood Beach was a well-kept secret.

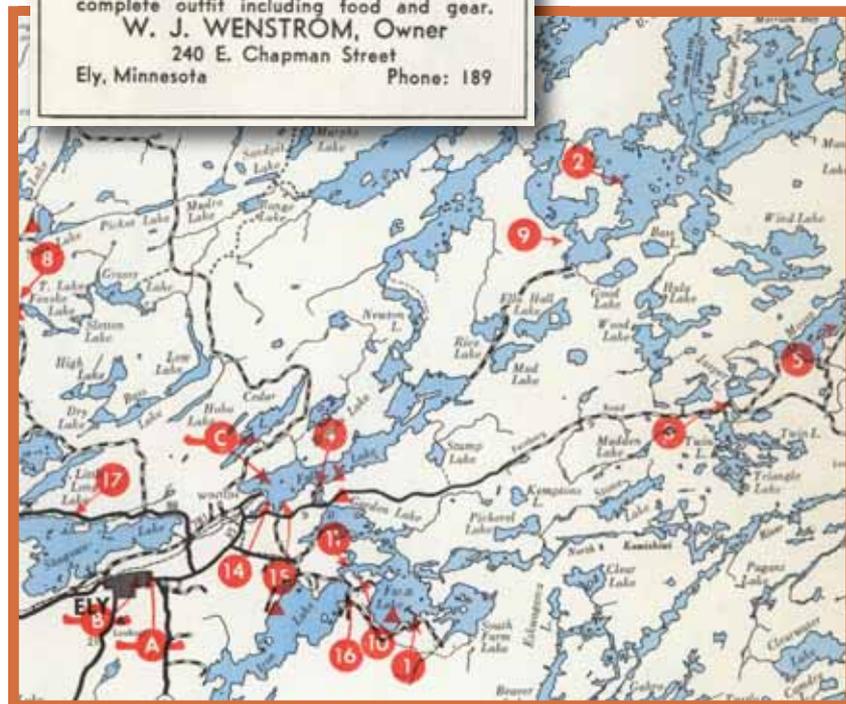
## Historic Yes, Grand No

Basswood Beach Resort was not what one would call a 'grand lodge' that existed elsewhere on Basswood, Burntside, Snowbank or Crooked Lakes. Although grand in many ways, it was not the 'elegant' grand displayed by others. Rather, Basswood Beach was a fishing camp that consisted of eight cabins, one of which was the 'Big Shack' built by Bill himself in the 1930s for use as his and Lill's personal residence.

Basswood Beach operated on a housekeeping plan at a rate of \$50 per week for two plus \$10 per week for each additional person. Thus, a family of four could vacation for a week for \$70 in lodging cost or \$2.50 per person per day. Each rustic cabin was equipped for independent living, most often by families or parties of fishermen vacationing during the summer. Each cabin had its own dock, outhouse, water pump, propane refrigerator,



Basswood Beach Resort ad as appeared on the reverse side of a 1952 Superior National Forest and Quetico Provincial Park map published by W.A. Fisher Company, Virginia MN.



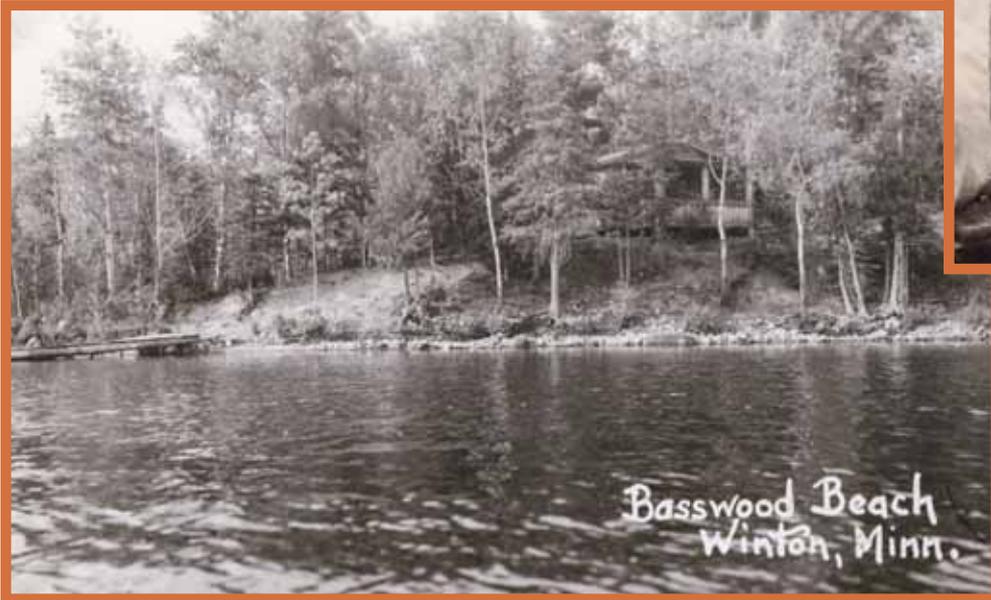
Among the historic lodges and other developments of the Quetico-Superior, Basswood Beach was a well-kept secret.

and electric lights from a common generator. Each was also provided with bed linens and bath towels. Lights typically were out by ten when Bill flipped the off switch!

Like visitors to Basswood Beach Report, canoeists brought only their personal clothing and other possessions and fishing gear. Basswood Beach provided each party, typically young men, with canoes, paddles, pack-sacks for portaging gear, a tent, sleeping bags and air mattresses, food selected from a pre-prepared list, and a complete camp kitchen including cook-ware and utensils.

Three of the seven cabins at Basswood Beach Resort were of hand-hewn logs; the others were of frame construction. Like the Big Shack, Bill and

With tenure from 1932 until 1967, Basswood Beach Resort was one of the first and last operating resorts on Basswood Lake.



Above: The 'West Side' cabin at Basswood Resort. Above right: Chicago clientele, lower right: Barbie, Pete, and "Big Bill" Wenstrom. All photos and memorabilia courtesy Barbara Wenstrom Shank collection.



helpers built all. One log cabin, known as the 'North Side' was disassembled and reconstructed in the 1960s. It can be prominently seen today on the Echo Trail outside of Ely.

Basswood Beach's 9.8 acres had two prominent features: over 900 feet of natural sand beach and a rocky ledge, know as Wenstrom's Point, jutting out into the lake. The property had a variety of northern trees including pine, balsam, cedar, spruce, aspen, birch and some ash, making it an unusually attractive site. Getting to Basswood Lake took time and effort. From the dock landing in Winton, one took a launch across Fall Lake, bus transportation across the Four-mile Portage, and another launch on Basswood to the resort. It was a 13-mile journey from town to Basswood, taking generally two to three hours.

#### A Varied Clientele

Working class folks mainly from the Midwest, Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio, and some hardy souls driving in from California, Kansas, Nebraska, Texas and Washington were the mainstay of this family business. It was particularly popular for family vacations with one of the finest sandy beaches on the lake. On Saturday morning, guests would gather at the Wenstrom home in Ely, welcomed by Lillian to enjoy coffee and (generally her homemade chocolate cake) while Bill filled their grocery orders at Bucca's Grocery. During this time, the Basswood Beach 'employees', Pete and Barbie Wenstrom, were madly cleaning boats and cabins, making beds, and otherwise preparing for the incoming batch of guests who would arrive after lunch.

#### The Last Hold Out

President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Wilderness Preservation Act of 1964 on September 3, 1964. Among other provisions the bill allowed the Federal government to acquire 'in-holdings' within other government land scheduled for designation as wilderness areas. An in-holding is private property within the boundaries of an otherwise established government tract such as the Superior National Forest. Accordingly, Basswood Beach Resort and other properties on Basswood Lake and elsewhere were condemned for Federal acquisition under eminent domain. With tenure from 1932 until 1967, Basswood Beach Resort was one of the first and last operating resorts on Basswood Lake.

After the resort officially closed, Bill retained possession of one cabin for his personal use for seven years. The settlement agreement also required that for every additional year he continued to reside on the land, he would repay the government 2% of the price negotiated during the condemnation process. Bill and members of his family visited Basswood seasonally for several years into the 1970s, until Bill could no longer manage the trip.

Today, you would never know that for so many years Wenstrom's Point had been a thriving and well-established destination. The once open area maintained by manually removing the shrub layer and filled with cabins, docks and walking trails has grown over, and the woods now encroach on the shoreline. Basswood Beach Resort and Canoe Trips is now only a memory to be cherished by those who vacationed there or, like us, were lucky to grow up there.

## Frank B. Hubachek, Jr. ("Bill") 1923-2011

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Frank B. Hubachek, Jr. ("Bill") on January 21, 2011. The 2010 summer issue of *Wilderness News* featured Hub's Place, the Wilderness Research Center on Basswood Lake founded by Bill's father, Frank Hubachek, in 1948. When Congress passed into law the 1964 Wilderness Act, the Research Center was moved out of the BWCAW to Fall Lake near Ely, MN. Bill took over stewardship of the Center in 1986 when Frank Sr. passed away. In recent years Bill and his surviving sister Midge turned over operation and control of the Center to the University of Minnesota. The University, with an endowment from the Hubachek family, plans to carry on the Center's research work and study of the red

and white pine forest ecology in the Quetico-Superior border region.

Born in 1923 to Frank B. and Marjorie (Mix) Hubachek, Bill attended New Trier High School and Yale University before getting his law degree from University of Chicago Law School. Bill served as a Navy fighter pilot during WWII. Bill's legal career of 60 years began with the law firm founded by his father, Hubachek & Kelly, and finished with 28 years as a Managing Partner of Chapman and Cutler LLP. Bill's greatest love and devotion was for his family. While Bill loved the practice of law and served his clients with an unrelenting work ethic, he also made time for his special interests—hunting,



canoeing and portaging the Boundary Waters of Minnesota and the Canadian Quetico.

Memorial contributions may be made to Wilderness Research Foundation, the forestry research foundation at P. O. Box 2593, Chicago, Illinois 60690.



Photo courtesy Chapman and Cutler LLP

## Meet Charles Kelly President emeritus of the Oberholtzer Foundation and QSF Board Member

By Alissa Johnson

**When Charles Kelly was five years old, he would climb out of bed, grab his pillow and his blanket and lie on the floor in front of his parents' third-floor guest room. Through the closed door, Charlie listened to Ernest Oberholtzer play the violin until his eyes became heavy and the young boy fell asleep on the floor. Ober, as Charlie calls him, visited the Kellys' Evanston, Illinois home often during the late 1920s; he, Sigurd Olson and Charlie's father were part of a group fighting efforts to dam the Rainy Lake Watershed on the United States and Canada border. Ober would become well known as an activist who preserved the watershed, but to Charlie, he was a childhood friend.**

"It was sort of a game. He would act as if he was surprised every time he found me outside the door, but he wasn't," Charlie says now.

Ober, Charlie's father and their fellow activists succeeded in lobbying Congress, which passed legislation that prevented the alteration of water levels in the Rainy Lake watershed, and Charlie—now 80—grew up to continue his family's legacy. An attorney, he has been a long-time board member of the Quetico Superior Foundation, the Oberholtzer Foundation, the Wilderness Research Foundation and an honorary member of Canada's Quetico Foundation. So long-time that most people are hard pressed to recall just how many years "long-time" means. Charlie places his start as a board member during the 1960s. But where most men point to a specific moment in the great northwoods or a tradition of family canoe trips as the origins for their activism, Charlie's reason is different.

"It's been my way of carrying on the work my father invested in all of his life, and I found very fascinating the people he brought home," Charlie says. "They were very fascinating, and I got to know them well."

Charlie grew up with Ober and Sigurd Olson as close family friends—they were, he says, a regular fixture in his life, both at his parents' home and the family farm in Wisconsin. But it was in

high school that Charlie finally got to know the land that Ober and Sig fought so hard to protect. Charlie suffered from hay fever that bordered on asthma; a doctor informed his family that if Charlie kept going to the family farm, it would kill him. So as a sophomore in high school, Charlie headed to the Boundary Waters, then known as the Superior Roadless Area, for a canoe trip with Sig, his son Bob, and an outdoor photographer.

"We went out to film a film later used in Congress to try to get the government to pass an air ban order prohibiting aircraft from flying below some number of feet over the wilderness area," Charlie says.

In the film, he says, just as the men are about to cast their lines, a plane roars in, pulls out a bunch of fish and roars out. In 1949, President Truman issued an executive order prohibiting flights over the Superior Roadless Area below 4,000 feet mean sea level; the order eliminated fly-ins. But Charlie's first visit to Oberholtzer's Mallard Island, where he would eventually help shape the direction of the Oberholtzer Foundation, came several years later after Charlie graduated from Amherst College in 1953 and Harvard Law School in 1956.

"I was getting out of law school and said, I think I ought to go up and see that island. I did stay on the island, but I walked across the ice to get there. Ober taught me that when you walk across Rainy Lake, even if it's 56 below, you take a canoe because you might fall through," Charlie says.

It was the first of many visits to the island. Even as Charlie returned to Chicago to practice law, first at Hubachek & Kelly, and then at Chapman and Cutler, he and his family visited the island regularly. Charlie remembers one visit in particular when Ober held a Native American ceremony to transport the spirit of Billy Magee, the Indian with whom he traveled to Hudson Bay in 1928, from a chimney on the shore of Rainy Lake to the island. Ober had sold the land where the chimney resided, and the new owners intended to tear it down.

"We had the kids up there, and the medicine man asked all children under the age of ten to come with him, and whatever they talked about for two hours he admonished them not to talk about with anybody, particularly with parents. So my daughter, who is nearly 50 now has never told me what was said," Charlie says.

Charlie also met his third and current wife at the island, Ober's goddaughter Jeane, when they both visited the island one summer.

"That was some 38 or 39 years ago, and we were fairly much in touch ever since. We married six years ago," Charlie says.

Over the years, Charlie periodically helped Ober with legal matters such as helping oversee the donation of Sand Point to the Canadian government. But much of his contribution to Ober's legacy came after Ober's death, when his will left some confusion as to the purpose of his Foundation.

"There developed a misunderstanding among the trustees if the purpose was to make grants or be an active Foundation," Charlie says. "I suggested that we go ahead and do what we thought we wanted to do, which was to have Native American groups on the island and conservation group meetings there and whatnot, and then when we had a record of having done these things go to the federal court saying what we were doing was within the boundaries of the trust agreement. It was a fairly open and shut procedure."

Native American culture had always been important to Ober. On his trip to Hudson Bay with Billy Magee, he recorded many conversations with natives along the route. Continuing that legacy became an important part of shaping the foundation.

"After he died, the trustees came into possession of those recordings but had no way of playing them. Because of their age, they were very brittle and if we played with them they broke. So we took them to the Library of Congress, and they had the ability to make recordings of what was on those wires..." Charlie says. "We had elders of the tribe come to the island with younger members and their families to listen to those recordings. They were all very excited because they could hear the voices of their grandparents or voices of people described to them... All of their history has been passed on orally but there was quite a period of time when alcohol damaged much of that tradition, and whole generations lost that tradition. The tapes from Ober helped change that. Helped them understand that history... and as a result of that and other things, [Ober and the islands] have been known as sacred to the Indians."

Today, the trustees give the Native Americans the islands for two weeks every summer, and over the years Charlie has invited them to participate in the board. But while Charlie downplays his role on the board, people like Jean Replinger, who has worked with the Oberholtzer Foundation since 1982, credit him with much more than an open and shut procedure in shaping the direction of the Foundation.

"Charlie included everyone, always. He simply said you're all important and we have to speak together about our interests and remember Ober's integrity... He listened for a long time, and then said...what can we pull out of that common interest?"

It is that fairness and objectivity, she says, that Charlie has always brought and continues to bring to the Oberholtzer Foundation and the Quetico Superior Foundation (he continues to be active with both boards).

"He honors listening," Jean says. "That's exceptional."

*It is a skill, perhaps, that he honed as a young boy, lying on the floor in front of Ober's door listening to the tune of his violin.*

## Wilderness News

### Summer 2011

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## Invasive Species in the Boundary Waters— *A question of what, not if*

By Alissa Johnson

In July, University of Minnesota forest ecologist Lee Frelich and Doug and Peggy Wallace, coordinators of a citizen's monitoring group, bush-whacked up a ridge in the Wolf Lake inventoried roadless area adjacent to the Trout Lake area of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). They poured a gallon of water and ground mustard seed over a square foot area of the ground and watched.

"Sure enough, even in that remote location, there were worms, including one of the most destructive (*L. Terrestris*)—night crawler," Doug Wallace said.

Only one variety of earthworm found in the Carolinas is native to the United States. Europeans introduced the rest, and in northern Minnesota, worms strip the forest floor bare. They eat through the leaf litter and leave exposed, black mineral soil behind. They also drive out native beetles that aerate the soil.

"From my personal observation, earthworms are spreading quite rapidly and in a lot of different places," Frelich said. "Most of the invasive plants are pretty much dependent on the worms because worms create the right germination environment. They co-evolved with the worms on their home continent, so that makes sense."

Doug and Peggy Wallace's citizen's group operates under an agreement with the Forest Service to monitor the Wolf Lake roadless area for invasive species, rare and endangered species, bird and raptor inventory, evidence of illegal motorized vehicle use, water quality and recreational use.

In 2009, they verified the presence of earthworms using techniques recommended by Frelich. Their July hike confirmed that worms are more widespread than they thought, and the group plans to continue the survey throughout the roadless area and into the Boundary Waters to keep track of changes.

Frelich also hopes to survey the Boundary Waters region. He has applied for funding through the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), which makes recommendations to the legislature on how to allocate funds from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund.

"People have done some small surveys here and there, but this will be a more systematic survey. We would look inside and outside of the wilderness to see if what is outside is ready to come in," Frelich said.

Frelich has already observed Buckthorn in the Ely area, and suspects there are more invasive species. With funding, he and University of Minnesota PhD students would complete a three-year survey to better understand what invasive species are present inside and out of the BWCAW, and how they are responding to climate change. The question then will be what to do about it. As Frelich points out, it may be too late for worms—the BWCAW does not have a live bait rule prohibiting its use as other wilderness areas do, and their presence is already clear. But for some species, it might not be too late.

"I have been looking myself whenever I've been there and I am seeing invasive species everywhere that I go, at least worms and smaller plants. There's no buckthorn in the BWCAW yet, so we need to get rid of it outside [of the wilderness] so it doesn't spread into the wilderness," Frelich said.



Earthworm (*Lumbricus terrestris*) courtesy Wikipedia.org

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