

FROM THE SCRAPBOOK
A Fishing Expedition to Kedron Lake, 1939
by Rev. Dr. William Randall
Reprinted from The Harvey Lionews April, 1996

In 1934 the Harvey Creamery was built by an enterprising family from Scotsburn, N.S., The McLean family; William McLean, Elwood McLean and Edgar McLean.

Elwood had a nephew Dean R. Gordon who came from Nova Scotia in the summer to work for the creamery. Probably 1939 and 1940. Some of his memories of Harvey are contained in a book he wrote, "The Battle of Cape Breton."

One of his memories is of a fishing trip and I found it so interesting I wanted to share it with you - I contacted Mr. Gordon in Phoenix, Arizona and he graciously gave me permission to use his story - Thanks.

Elwood McLean and Snipe Swan had planned a fishing trip to the Kedron Lake and each would bring along a nephew to help with the portage from the south end of Oromocto Lake to Kedron Lake. Gordon had heard of Snipe's nephew Kayo, everyone had, and he was not overjoyed at the thought until he discovered that the nephew was actually Kayo's half brother Harold. Everything was packed and ready to hit the lake at the break of dawn.

Under a shroud of early morning darkness the fishing party waited in vain for the wind to subside. The weather looked hopeless and they knew too well what a south wind on the ten-mile stretch of Oromocto could do. The lake would be whipped into a white-capped fury. By noon the wind had lost some of its force, and encouraging weather reports prompted them to drive out to the lake, just in case. By two o'clock the waves in the cove began to level out and they pushed off. The plan was to follow the western shore where whitecap activity looked less intense. They were not yet out of the cove when the bow began to dip into the waves and it was evident that some of the load must be shifted aft. Snipe had been positioned in the bow in order to spot shoals and rocks, but he was a big man so he traded places with Harold and sat beside Gordon at midship.

Uncle Elwood sat in the transom seat and operated the outboard, and, as the water roughened was forced to control the bow of the canoe in tow. The short tow line occasionally required his outstretched arm to prevent the canoe from ramming forward, it seemed to work fairly well, or at least for the next half hour. Now abreast of Simms Cove, there had to be a big decision. Continue or abort, into the calm of Simms cove and the last road to civilization. Ahead was the roughest stretch of water and the nearness to the rocky shore held little consolation with the realization that survival from a swamped boat here would be a miracle.

Dead into the wind and although the boat rode well the waves began breaking over the bow and too much water was being taken aboard. Gordon and Snipe bailed and Harold braces his raincoat clad back against the curve of the bow and the onslaught of water.

For the next hour the boat wallowed on and on against a heavy sea and to all, the end of the lake appeared almost within their grasp. Then it happened! The bow dipped under a huge wave, catching Harold in the back and drove him hard against Gordon and

Snipe at mid ship. The shift of the weight helped and pulled the bow higher and as the wave passed the canoe rode high on its crest but only to bang down on the transom with an ear splitting crash and everyone knew for sure that the boat had stuck a rock. One look at Elwood McLean and the bobbing canoe told them otherwise. He filled in the details of the mishap that had so nearly cost him his life. As the great wave rolled aft, the canoe had bobbed high beyond his reach, only to plummet into the depth of the following trough and slam hard onto the transom. A few inches farther to the left and his skull would have been split wide open.

Fortunately that was the last big wave and its very existence seemed to signal an ebb in the severity of watery turmoil. Before long the whitecaps were gone and Elwood set a direct course diagonally across the end of the lake, the ultimate destination on the extreme south east corner of Oromocto Lake.

In order to reach Kedron before dark there was no time to dry out and prior to disembarking each man was assigned a specific task. The boat, motor and what precious gasoline was left had to be securely hidden, salvage and repack the soggy supplies, and make ready for the portage through the woods to the Kedron.

To call the route a trail was an exaggeration, but Snipe knew the general direction and led the way. Harold and Gordon shouldered the canoe. They heaved and dragged it through underbrush and over rocks and fallen logs and stumps and knew for sure that Snipe had lied when saying it was only a mile. It must have been five! The good thing, the exertion dried the clothes. The bad thing, they commenced to perspire and by the time their exhausted carcasses came to a halt at the Kedron, their clothes were wet, soaked with sweat.

At that point the tow boys were bushed and had only energy enough to watch, watch Elwood McLean assemble his two piece "Jim Vail" fly rod. The hundred-dollar rod that had been given to him, by the Rotarians as recognition for his work in community service. The connection was not by the common metal feral, which interferes with flexibility and balance, but rather by a modified tapered split and held in place by wrapping with a sticky, somewhat like adhesive tape.

Both uncles went fishing... in the canoe. The nephews were now left along with instructions to secure the supplies within the small one room log cabin. "Out of reach of the bears". Actually the cabin was built on a bank overlooking the lake but was screened by such a dense growth of fir and spruce that the water was barely visible. Exploration at the waters edge turned up an old wooden tub of a boat and they decided on their own fishing expedition.

Alas, it was soggy and waterlogged and both were afraid to venture far into an unknown lake and the fast moving darkness.

It was nine when the canoe returned with a string of trout including one five-pounder to display in the light of the campfire. Everyone was famished and it took little time to prepare a gourmet meal "fit for a king". Five pounds of bacon and huge can of baked beans and black coffee and a loaf of bread. A mere bedtime snack!

Dead tired, they all fell into sleeping bags, some to sleep and some to wish they could sleep. Gordon fell into the second category, his stomach rolled and he rolled and

tossed and his brain formed mental pictures at each and every strange sound, sounds from the forest, insects and birds and beasts all in the dead of the night and one predominate thought, could it be a bear?

Intermingled with these sounds of nature, were the atrocities of man. The buzz saw snore, and gasp ... And snore, and gasp. Over and over in continuing frequency with only an occasional lull, or snort. Then at the other end of spectrum, the havoc of the beans. A full orchestration from the wind section, tuba to piccolo with every note a discord to rival as Copeland's "Gun Battle". Then there were the smells of nature. Outside, the sweet fragrance of cedar and a lingering wisp of wood smoke. With in a full range of powerful odors, from putrid, to God-awful.

Daybreak. The boys were the first to rise. They needed a head start to get anywhere with that old scow of a boat. A beautiful cloudless day and the lake lay shimmering, a jewel of reflection embraced by the greenery of fir and spruce and cedar, right to the water's edge. Clumsily the craft moved and the slap and rasp of the oars echoed back to shatter a tranquil silence. Neither of the boys possessed sophisticated fishing gear and unlike the uncles, they were forced to use worms -- hook, line and sinker and a telescope rod. They sat, and fished and when the sunlight improved they could see that the water was clear, and there were fish down there, but they weren't biting. Eventually they did snag a few small trout but the big ones paid no attention to worms. It was frustrating, twelve feet of the clearest water they had ever seen, and the biggest trout swimming lazily at the bottom. Disgusted, they rowed to the north shore to look for Kedron balls!

I would love to have a Kedron Ball at the H.H. A - Library! Any contributions? Bill