

NETTIE FOX

By, Marge Homer

Because I was very young when my parents Margaret and Arthur Hartman, started coming to Diamond Lake, my recollections of the days when Mrs. Fox owned Diamond Lake Lodge, while colorful and exciting, are sketchy and vague. It is too bad that my mother, Margaret Hartman, is not here to write this as she took such an intense interest in all matters of history and nature and was very skilled at recalling and documenting them. I regret now that as a child and even in growing up I did not take more seriously the precious events and conditions that were being lived.

I do have a letter written by Cash Coburn, from whom Nettie Fox purchased the resort on Diamond Lake. It is dated February 8, 1922, which means that is the year the resort changed hands, In this letter he is assuring Mrs. Fox that she can trust him to go through with the deal, though he does not want any cash to change hands until the weather conditions become such that transportation is feasible and also does not want to move his bees from the cellar until milder weather. He urges her not to start sending things up or attempt to travel until further hearing from him. Incidentally his stationary reads "COBURN RESORT on Diamond Lake. Rates \$2.00 per day. Special by Week"

Apparently, it was not too long after the deal took place that my parents started coming to Diamond Lake Lodge as Nettie Fox renamed it. Nettie Fox is a legend. There are probably records that can tell you more about statistics about her than I can. I can only guess that she was in her forties when she took the resort. I believe. There was a daughter, Josephine, who visited rarely, stayed the good part of one summer that I can remember. She was fascinating to me because the story was that she played the piano in movie houses and cabarets. It seems there was not too much rapport between mother and daughter, though they certainly looked alike and had the same snappy disposition.

I always called her Mrs. Fox, as did my parents, but to her friends and neighbors she was Nettie. A small woman, thin as a rail and wiry. There was no task she didn't tackle from logging, farming, and cooking three meals a day for her guests. She always had a variety of domestic animals that had quite free reigns of the grounds and house, though the chickens were not allowed past the kitchen. She called them her "babies". She had her experiences with bears stealing her lambs and she routed them with any means handy including the broom. From time to time she had someone residing with her to help her and she ruled with a firm but generous hand. I remember an Indian named Mitchell and his daughter Celia as they were there a number of years. Other stays were shorter lived.

However, it was obvious that Nettie Fox was not always a back woods woman. She was well educated. While her outfit was always pretty much the same as I recall it . . . cotton housedress with feedbag apron, bandana on head, sometimes high shoes or tennis shoes. In the many boxes and trunks that she had stored around the lodge, were some fine things . . . lace stoles, jewelry, fancy buttons, elegant shoes, fur pieces, satin gowns. One of the highlights of our vacation would be if she would open one of these boxes and show her treasures. Her stories were exciting and spicy. She would have a stock reply when you would tell her of anything that happened, good or bad. It was, "serves you right".

My mother and I would often stay an extra week or two while my dad would go back to tend to his business, or maybe come ahead of time. We would arrive on the train in Grand View and be met by anything from horse and wagon to a dilapidated "fliver". We usually felt safer with the wagon because we'd be told stories of the vast failings of the automobile and I could never see how we'd make it back to Diamond Lake over those roads. The mud and the ruts were as frightening to me as the stands of virgin timber were glorious. During these stays on our own we were treated to special outings such as to all day picnics which meant rowing across Diamond Lake in a frail wooden rowboat and portaging over to Crystal Lake where we would swim and have the interesting lunch that Mrs. Fox concocted. There were

very few dwellings on Diamond Lake then, but Nettie was a good tour guide. Another exciting expedition was a hike in the woods towards Porky Lake. We would take containers to get the sparkling spring water from a special spot along the way. (By the way, the only drinking water at the lodge in those days was straight from Diamond Lake.) The highlight, though, was the place where Indians had camped in the past. There were the remains of a shelter they had built and the structure of their campfire. It was sad for me when finally, there was no evidence left of this.

Then the day came when after all these years of summer vacations, the fabulous bass fishing, Nettie Fox's sturdy meals and Pinky's deer hunting trips with his best buddies, that Art and Margaret Hartman decided to abandon their city luxuries and buy Diamond Lake Lodge from Mrs. Fox. This was in 1940. Mrs. Fox retained a piece of land on the property and a tiny cabin to live in and a boat. She took what precious belongings she could, and the little cabin had only narrow passageways to get around in. She would row her boat over to the main lodge to get supplies and to chatter. She was close to eighty or perhaps more. I don't know for sure when she died, and her ashes were strewn on her beloved Diamond Lake in accordance with her wish. As I said, this extraordinary lady is a legend. I wish I had the ability to do her story justice.

Nettie Fox

By, Gladys Heppard

Nettie's husband bought Diamond Lake Resort and Nettie lived there at the time we came to Diamond Lake. There was one grown daughter, Josephine.

Nettie was quite the eccentric, such as: she rowed a boat the opposite way most people did as she wanted to see where she was going, not where she'd been; she would put food away and forget where she'd put it; she'd ask me to follow her to Cable, I'd wait for her for the trip home. She could not be convinced to take the car out of second gear.

Even with her peculiar ways, she was generous and always willing to share.

She always expressed the wish to be cremated upon her death and then her ashes were to be thrown in Diamond Lake. On that day we watched the flowers come down the lake from south to north.