



# Manitou Islands Memorial Society

V17 No 1

Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2006



Photo: Ronald Rosie

## **Ronald Rosie - First's Older Boy**

This was our home for a while when I was a boy. We were "the Rosies" ... the lightkeepers.

The South Manitou Island Light Station was an important navigation facility then; a landmark that every Great Lakes mariner knew, instantly recognized and often depended upon for safety while navigating the Manitou Passage. The U.S. Lighthouse Service therefore saw to it that the place was kept in tip-top condition.

We really didn't need to be pressed; we understood the importance of what we were doing. There was a camaraderie between lightkeepers and mariners that didn't depend on their ever actually knowing each other. That was especially true of

these outposts. Familiar vessels were like old friends.

In its day, the Light Station was alive with activity. A three-keeper crew stood watches around the clock, while the families busied themselves with chores and play. "The Light" was also an important part of the island community, superior in status, actually, even to the Lifesaving Station. Everyone on the island knew the lightkeepers and their families.

For most of today's visitors, the light isn't much more than an impressive tower with a breathtaking view. So I want to tell you about some of my memories, and maybe next time you visit the place, you'll be more able to tune in to its past. You'll find my story inside the next issue. For now, enjoy the imaginative article you'll find reprinted on page 6. ■



Photo: Montgomery &amp; Steward

### Lois Farley

Lois O. Farley, 88, born Feb. 5, 1918, in South Manitou Island, Michigan passed away March 5, 2006, in Pueblo, Colorado.

Preceded in death by husband, Robert Farley; parents, Lawrence and Myrtle Haas; brother, Theron Haas and infant sister, Jessie Bells, Lois is survived by sons, Wayne R. (Mary Jo), James W. (Gerry) of Pueblo; grandchildren,

Jeffrey (Theresa) Farley, Jayne (Ray) Renkosik, Jennifer (David) Aldag and Melissa (Daniel) Colussi; great-grandchildren, Emily and Sean Farley, Dylan and Deandra McCain, Justin Renkosik, Alyssa Marquez, Brett and Julia Boerner, Emily and Erin Aldag.

A memorial service for Lois was held in Pueblo on Friday afternoon, March 10, 2006, at the Penthouse of the Presbyterian Towers. ☐

### Annual Memorial Observance

The annual memorial ceremony at the South Manitou Island cemetery honors members, friends and former North and South Manitou islanders whose passing has been made known to the Society during the preceding year. The traditional observance is part of the annual South Manitou Island Excursion, always on the Sunday of the last weekend of July. The service includes traditional music, a short message of remembrance, and the tolling of the bell as each name is read.

Assure that your loved ones and friends will be remembered in this way. Please use the envelope included with the newsletter to share your information, or see this newsletter's address panel for other contact information.

Supporting preservation and restoration work on the islands is also an appropriate way to honor former islanders on their passing. The Memorial Society has tasteful contribution kits always available for immediate mailing to funeral directors. Charitable contribution "in lieu of flowers" can also be sent by directly by regular mail. All contributions are promptly and graciously acknowledged. ☐



Photo: MIMS

### Special Observance for Edward and Esther Riker

Friends are invited to accompany the family to South Manitou Island to pay their respects for Ed and Esther Riker, on Sunday, September 10, 2006.

Ferry transportation will be provided. The *Manitou Isle* will sail from Leland's Fishtown docks at 10 o'clock in the morning returning at sunset (about 6 o'clock) that afternoon. A light lunch will be served at the Coast Guard Station upon arrival at the island. Following a special service at the South Manitou cemetery, there will be a time for visiting during a tour of the family's beloved island, including visits to the former Riker farmsteads.

Please note these arrangements are subject to change to accommodate weather and personal contingencies. RSVP is therefore requested. All are welcome.

Arrangements are being handled by Martinson Funeral Home of Suttons Bay. You may call (231) 271-3441 or email martinsonfh@aol.com. ☐

### Is What We Do Really Worthwhile?

*"To live for the moment is the prevailing passion – to live for yourself, not for your predecessors or posterity. We are fast losing the sense of historical continuity, the sense of belonging to a succession of generations originating in the past and stretching into the future."*

Christopher Lasch  
*"The Culture of Narcissism"*

*"This loss of historical continuity works both ways in terms of time. Devaluation of the past breaks the perceptual link to the future, which becomes a vast unknown, a source of dread as much as hope."*

Jerrold Kreisman & Hal Straus  
*"I Hate You – Don't Leave Me"*

Who can explain the mystique of islands? Is it about refuge; about safety within visible boundaries? Is it about "splendid isolation" ... the peacefulness of a place set apart from the mad pace of mainland life?

Much of what makes the islands so special to visitors is the story of their past; that these two patches of land were once "home" to thriving communities of loggers, farmer and sailors, and important outposts for Great Lakes maritime activity, the only practical way to travel and ship goods during that epoch in American history.

Was your family a part of the story? If so, your family's collections of photographs, scrapbooks, letters and memories can become a permanent part of the islands' stories, available to generations well beyond ours. The Memorial Society can help you make that happen. Please spread the word in your family. Those moldering boxes full of grandma's "junkie" might be someone else's treasure! ☐



## News from the Lakeshore –

### *New General Management Plan*

A General Management Plan is required by law for every area administered by the National Park Service (NPS). The purpose of the plan is to ensure that each NPS area has a defined direction for resource preservation and visitor use. The General Management Plan focuses on why the area was established and what resource conditions and visitor experiences should be achieved and maintained over time. The GMP considers an area's mission or purpose, and provides management prescriptions, which include desired resource conditions and visitor experiences for each part of a NPS administered area. General Management Plans take a long-term view and are updated as conditions change, about every 15-20 years.

The Lakeshore's current GMP initiative, begun early this spring with a "scoping" campaign to gather public input, is now entering its second phase. The goal of this second phase is the compilation of inputs and the formulation of concepts that will serve as the foundation of what will eventually become specific management alternatives.

Incorporated in the process are requirements for an environmental impact statement and a new wilderness study. A previous GMP initiative stalled at this point four years ago because of "access" concerns related to potential wilderness recommendations. The renewed planning effort therefore incorporates greater opportunities for public input. A series of open houses earlier this spring and other opportunities to comment, now continues with a series of public workshops late this month (June 20 and 21).

The Lakeshore is also publishing a "GMP Newsletter" for those interested in tracking the process. The second edition of the newsletter, which includes a summary of the comments received thus far, is available online at [www.nps.gov/slbe](http://www.nps.gov/slbe), the Lakeshore's official web site. Superintendent Dusty Schulz has requested that second phase comments be submitted by July 7<sup>th</sup>, but also advises that the target completion date for the GMP process is late in 2008, and there will be many opportunities for public input between now and then. ☐

### **Memorial Society's "1<sup>st</sup> Phase" GMP Comment**

*Successfully submitted via ...*

*[http://parkplanning.nps.gov/commentForm.cfm?\\_projectID=14651&documentId=13751](http://parkplanning.nps.gov/commentForm.cfm?_projectID=14651&documentId=13751)*

*March 17, 2006 3:40 PM EST*

The Manitou Island Memorial Society is an incorporated nonprofit membership organization serving as an advocacy for the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore's North and South Manitou Islands.

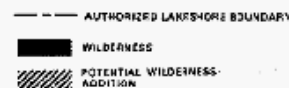
With reference to "GMP/WS Newsletter #1", our opinion is that the draft "Purpose" and "Significance" statements are accurate and sufficient, and the list of "Issues and Concerns" is comprehensive and valid.

Regarding the issue of "Wilderness", we request that the area of South Manitou Island designated "potential wilderness" in the January 1981 Wilderness Recommendation for Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, or an appropriate portion thereof, be deleted from the recommendation, in order to provide public access to important geologic, historic and cultural assets located along the island's southern coastal area by means of the motor tour provided by the present or future concessionaire.

The current designation is not conducive to broadening and improving the lakeshore's interpretive effort, as recommended in the 1996 NPS-sponsored study "Coming



#### LEGEND



Through With Rye", (1) since it effectively prevents access to these sites to everyone but those campers having the physical wherewithal to reach them by hiking, and (2) since even that experience is without any accompanying interpretive effort on the part of the Lakeshore.

The 1996 study was launched by the Midwest Regional Office as part of a broader project focusing on historic agricultural landscapes within the lakeshore, and therefore focused narrowly on the island's agricultural history, giving only passing recognition to other important aspects of its natural and human history and culture. With the exception of tours of the island's lighthouse, preservation and interpretive efforts have since been concentrated on certain assets related to its agricultural history and culture, such that the significance of the island's history is at risk of being lost through the misunderstanding of what visitors see and hear. Access to other assets located along the southern coast of the island, with accompanying interpretive services, will do much to correct this imbalance, and assure that the diversity of past human activity on the island is more accurately presented.

Towards facilitating the consideration of this request, the Memorial Society will poll interested parties to develop an understanding of what seems possible, practical and appropriate, and will be prepared to present a more concise proposal to the Superintendent at a later date."

We understand and respect the statutory/policy requirements initiating and guiding this GMP/WS initiative. However, regardless, or in spite of, whatever laws, policies, plans have been, or will be, drafted to regulate the management of the Lakeshore, its success as an institution and quality as a neighbor depends mostly upon the character of its local leadership. Our experience suggests that we are very fortunate in this respect at the moment. In this, we think, lies everyone's best prospects for cultivating a happy future for the Lakeshore. We are honored by the opportunity participate in the process, and will proceed in that spirit. [end] ☐



### Where to Stay – the 25-Mile Triangle

Finding nearby accommodations is often a challenge at this time of year, near the peak of the summer season. While Beulah, Empire, Glen Arbor and Leland all offer motels, inns and B&B's, reservations are often difficult to come by. But did you know that the distance between Empire and Leland, Leland to Traverse City, and Traverse to Empire is all about the same ... about 25 miles?

Finding a place to stay in Traverse is easy ... the Traverse City Convention & Visitors Bureau offers a free area-wide Central Reservation Service, with travel counselors who will assist you in checking room availability, rates, and in making a reservation. Just dial 1-800-TRAVERS (1-800-872-8377). Or visit [www.mytraversecity.com/accommodations/](http://www.mytraversecity.com/accommodations/) to see what's available and to make reservations online. ☐

### Annual Election – All Offices Open

"Uncle MIMS needs you! As a result of last year's null cycle, all offices are up for election this year; President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Appointed offices, Media Director, Hospitality Director and Project Coordinator are also open.

The bylaws provide that when the annual meeting fails to elect offices to open positions, those currently serving in those offices will continue as "pro tem" until someone else is duly elected or appointed, or they choose to resign. The President



and Treasurer are ordinarily elected in every even numbered year, while the Vice President and Secretary offices become available in every odd numbered year. Appointed positions are filled every year by the new Board. The board meets quarterly at mutually agreeable locations. Between meetings board members communicate with each other and are kept up to date via email.

This is a great opportunity to be of service and get involved in some very rewarding volunteer work. Submit your name, or your recommendation, to [gwarner@manitouislands.org](mailto:gwarner@manitouislands.org), or call any board member. ☐

### Island Excursion Weather Forecast

Didn't like last year's conditions? Take heart; they weren't normal. Based on conditions recorded over the past ten years, the weather in the Manitou Passage at 11:00 AM on Sunday July 30<sup>th</sup> is likely to be partly cloudy, 74-degrees, no rain, with north-westerly winds running about 7.6 MPH. Last year's winds were the highest on record for our excursion day, so if you came last year, you've survived the worst. ☐

### Schoolhouse Project Report

After hundreds of volunteer hours and a few thousand dollars of contributed funding, the old South Manitou Island schoolhouse is beginning to reveal some of its original character and charm. The noises, dust, sweat and grime has gradually given way to the more rewarding quiet of "finishing touches".

During the last four workshops, the remaining old plaster walls and lathe was removed, and gypsum wallboard was installed on the ceiling and walls in the schoolroom. The rotting ceiling in the coatroom was removed, and a new pine bead board ceiling was installed across the entrance area, privies and coatroom. The old "non-original" furnace was dismantled and taken away. New wood was fitted in rotted sections of the hardwood floor (above, Peter Jenks) and lots of elbow grease was expended with workers on hands and knees scrubbing away decades of soil and dust.



Photo: Gwen Glatz



Photo: Gwen Glatz

A new coat of paint on ceilings, walls and wainscot has brightened up the room, and just like in days of old, the morning sun once more shines through the little upper window panes, onto the blackboard on the opposite wall. With luck, the Lakeshore will be bringing over some furniture and artifacts, so that by the day of our annual trip to the island, the volunteer crew will be able to show of an "exhibit-ready" piece of the island's history. After that, the

idea is that the rangers, volunteer interpreters and MIT's motor tour operators will carry keys, so that future island visitors will be able to enter the building and hear about what it met to generations of islander and their children.

The completion of this project represents the realization of a long-time dream for MIMS member Gwen Glatz. Gwen was determined that the schoolhouse would be saved and one day restored to its former glory. To finally accomplish that end, she became our "Project Coordinator", assuming the task of recruiting crews of highly skilled and motivated volunteers, planning and scheduling the work, and managing the logistics of purchasing materials, supplies and equipment and transporting them to the island. ☐



Photo: Peter & Katy Jenks



### Schedule

#### Annual Reunion/Meeting

Saturday – July 29, 2006  
Empire Township Hall, Empire, MI

**10:00 AM – 12:00 PM:** Arrival and check-in at the Township Hall. Time to socialize ... renew old and make new acquaintances. Enjoy a slide shows and exhibits. Coffee, tea, and soft drinks will be provided.

**12:00 PM** – Pot Luck Luncheon. *Bring a dish to share if you can.*

**1:00 PM** – Annual Meeting.

**1:30 PM** – Program (to be announced).

**3:00 PM** – Final announcements and adjournment.

**3:30 PM** – Last call for refreshments; volunteer crew begins the "GI Party"!

**4:00 PM** – Hall closes.

Staying Overnight? – Stroll up the hill from the blinker to the Lakeshore's Visitor Center to see the exhibits and buy a souvenir. Take some late afternoon sun and a refreshing swim at the Empire City Beach, or the North Bar Lake Beach just north of town. Browse the shops "downtown", then discover the other over-niters at Joe's Friendly Tavern (great burgers and creative "specials") or The Village Inn (pizza, and regular menu items).

**Sunset** – Join the Empire tradition of meeting at the Empire City Beach to watch the sun go down. Cool breezes, friendly conversation, jokes and good times. The "Green Flash Society" is a BYOB affair ... water, tea, soda pop or what have you. ☐

#### "Saturdays at the Lakeshore" – an Alternate Activity for Young Family Members

Park Rangers lead hikes in the Lakeshore every Saturday afternoon during the month of July. Each outing has a different educational and interpretive theme. For July 29<sup>th</sup>, it's "Food for Thought", a walk through one of the Park's most diverse areas to learn about naturally occurring plants that at one time provide an everyday source of food in generations past.

The hikes are free and suitable for most ages. The activity lasts about two hours. Reservations are not needed, however a park entrance pass (day pass, Golden Age Passport, or etc.) is required for this activity. Meet the ranger at the Empire Visitor Center at 1:00 PM for a brief introduction, then drive a short distance to the location of the hike. An announcement will be made prior to the annual meeting. Volunteer drivers will be provided, if needed. ☐

### Schedule

#### South Manitou Island Excursion

Sunday – July 30, 2006  
Fishtown Docks, Leland, MI

**9:15 AM** – Recommended arrival and check-in time at Leland's Fishtown docks. Advance reservations are advised to guarantee space and avoid the sometimes-hectic last minute activity on the dock ... phone MIT at 231-256-9061. Free parking will be provided for participants by arrangement with MIT (Please provide your license plate number at check-in.)

**10:00 AM** – All Aboard; *Mishe-Mokwa* departs for South Manitou.

**11:30 PM** – Arrival at the island. Assemble on the lawn at the Coast Guard Station. Welcoming comments/orientation, distribution of handouts, and enjoy a complimentary picnic buffet.

**12:30 PM** – Traditional Memorial Ceremony at the Main Cemetery, honoring members and friends who have made the "final crossing" since last we met. Rev Kirby D Smith, from Lansing's historic Westminster Presbyterian Church, officiates as our volunteer chaplain. The ceremony features appropriate music, and the ringing of the bell as honorees are cited. Transportation will be provided for everyone from the Station to the Main Cemetery, courtesy of MIMS and MIT.

This year's ceremony will include the dedication of markers placed by the Sheridan family in memory of Lightkeepers Aaron and Julia Sheridan, and their infant son Robert, who were tragically lost at sea in 1878. The final committal of the remains of Edward and Esther Riker, South Manitou's last farmers and permanent residents will immediately follow, with a graveside remembrance and celebration of their lives.

**1:30 PM** – Tours & Guided Hikes

- Motor Tours, courtesy of MIMS and MIT, will continue for those wishing to participate in that activity.
- A choice of guided hikes will be offered for those wishing to experience the Island on foot.
- Lighthouse tours ... climb to the top of the tower for a breathtaking panoramic view of the Island and the Manitou Passage..

**3:00 ~ 4:00 PM** – Rendezvous time back at the Station, with complimentary refreshments.

**4:00 PM** – *Mishe-Mokwa* departs the island, hopefully with everyone aboard. Refreshments on the return trip will be provided by MIT on a self-pay basis.

**5:30/6:00 PM** – Arrival in Leland, and farewell for another year. ☐



Deep in the heart of the island is the lone school, a one-room affair that dispenses higher education to an enrollment expected to increase to 25. Pupils insist that teacher be native of island.



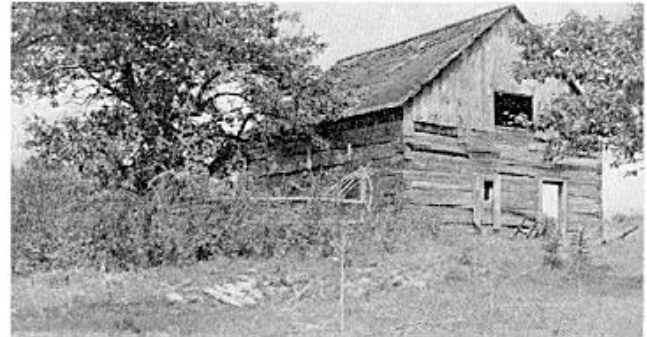
Taxi service on South Manitou Island is not the deluxe sort of transportation one would expect in a big city. Tommy Humphries, 14-year-old cabby, admits he has been driving for six years.

## MICHIGAN'S ISLE OF PEACE

*By Al Barnes*

*(From "Motor News" - August 1942)*

**Just a few miles out in Lake Michigan a quiet people live an almost legendary, peaceful life.**



Here is the old home of an early settler, with its fenced-in graves alongside. No one ever desecrates these ancient burial places by removing markings or picket fences. They remain in their original state, passing on from one owner to another.



Back in the days when this island was a bustling lumbering community there was an up-to-date boarding house. Here it is today, but choked by the encroaching forest. Natives are rapidly demolishing it however, using its lumber for repairs to homes.

There was once a community cemetery, which is now overgrown with trees and vines.





**L**YING just nine miles west of Glen Haven in Leelanau County of Michigan and within sight of one of the state's most popular playgrounds is South Manitou Island. Famous only through legend, the island is isolated from the mainland by the rolling waters of Lake Michigan and by the desire of its 70 residents to be apart from the world.

▲ Recently it has come to be known as the Isle of Peace. Here there are no courts of law, no lawyers, no churches, no quarrels, no welfare set-up and no desire on the part of the people to possess more than their lot of worldly goods.

Silhouetted against the skyline, the 7,000 acres of island presents a picture of quietness and solitude. It is dotted with shacks and dilapidated buildings, reminiscent of another and more prosperous day.

Of the early history of the island little is known. It is the smaller of two bodies of land. North Manitou, several times larger, is almost entirely uninhabited. There are no records available as to when the first white men came or who they might have been. It is known, however, that the Indians who lived on the mainland never settled on the island because of its difficult location and because of the lack of game.

It is reasonable to suppose, however, that the first white men arrived and settled long before the mainland was occupied by whites. Ancient graves, long ago overgrown and forgotten, are still marked in the dense woods which cover the area. Many of them are more than a century old.

▲ Replete in legend and lore, the island has been known since the early days of shipping as "the graveyard of the Great Lakes". This name was given rise, not because of any shipping hazard which the Manitous present, but because they are a halfway mark on Lake Michigan and a haven for storm-crippled ships. Ships, battered and torn, often put in at the natural harbor which South Manitou offers and oftentimes sunk before they could be repaired.

More than a dozen ships lie on the bot-tom of the lake within hailing distance of the shore. One ship, the Westmoreland, was supposed to have sunk with a cargo of whiskey and gold. Several attempts have been made to locate the hulk, but to no avail. Another boat, torn by a violent squall, sank in the harbor about 75 years ago. It can be seen from the surface today, with its rigging mostly intact and with tools and wrenches lying about on the deck.

The island's area is still covered with giant white cedars, such as those shown here.



But the people who live on South Manitou are indeed different. They are kindly, self-supporting, independent and proud. During the century that there has been settlement on the island there is no record of a serious quarrel. In fact, there is no law-enforcement officer or justice on the place.

▲ They derive their livelihood from agricultural pursuits and from net fishing in the adjacent waters. Trout, whitefish and perch are taken in considerable quantities. Suckers are also an item of commercial importance to the fishermen.

During the winter months there is a system of barter set up between the residents. Money isn't important. If a person runs out of potatoes, he merely goes to the man who has more than he can use and "borrows" some. When he harvests his crop he returns them.

On the whole island there are only nine dilapidated old automobiles. Not one of them is licensed because, as one native puts it: "The State won't do no improving our road." In fact, there are no highways. Access to the central portions of the island is over rough logging trails and cow paths.

At the present time there is a considerable acreage of virgin timber. Trees four feet in diameter, gigantic white cedars, are numerous. Lumbermen have not operated on the Isle of Peace for nearly half a century.

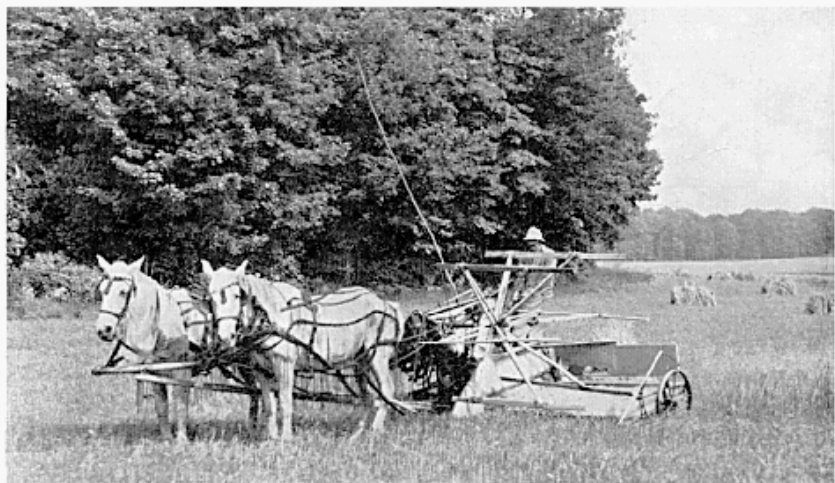
One-third of the population of South Manitou is under the age of 13 years. Twenty-one of these youngsters attend the tiny, one-room schoolhouse, about three miles inland. The teacher is a native lassie and rules the youngsters with a mailed fist. According to the oldsters, no one but a native understands them. A couple of years ago the board hired a mainlander and the kids ran the school. For reading lessons they brought the Police Gazette and during recess periods they played pedro for pennies.

Disease on the island is nil. There is no such thing as hay fever. Over the entire kingdom of this Michigan area there hangs a halo of quietness. Rightfully, it is the Isle of Peace.



Erected in 1839, this light has been the watchdog of the channel through storm and calm, without interruption. The light shines due east.

Farming is scattered all over the 7,000 acres. Pictured here is one of the leaders of the industry, George Hutzler, 72 years old, known as champion Russian rye grower of South Manitou.





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**February 12, 2006** - From Rose Marie ("Sis" Vander Wagen) Romero, Albuquerque, New Mexico

I personally have so many nice memories of South Manitou Island.

During the depression, my mother never bought cookies. But we knew when we got to Grandma's there would be cookies! She had two large gold lard cans full. She would sit me on one can and open the other, then tell me I could eat all the cookies I wanted. What a treat. Needless to say, I didn't let her down.

Uncle June would give us a nickel and we would immediately go to Bertha Peth's to buy candy. She had a candy case upstairs in her home. She would take us up there to select our nickel's worth. Sometimes we would see silverfish crawling about inside the candy case ... we ate the candy anyway.

And Grandpa ... he loved to tease us. On one trip, we went fishing up at the little lake close to Great-Grandma Haas' house. We drove up in Grandpa's little coupe car. After fishing, he placed the still alive fish on the rumble seat's floor. The fish, flopping around, scared Merlene and I to death. We would scream and Grandpa would laugh. Merlene and I never took our feet off the seat.

I hope to be able to travel to Michigan this summer and possibly go to the island. I know it has changed, but the memories are still there.

*"Mother": Lenore (Warner) Vander Wagen*  
*"Grandma & Grandpa": Rosie and August Warner*  
*"Great-Grandma Haas": Henry and Maggie (Hutzler) Haas*  
*"Uncle Jun": June Warner, August and Rosie's youngest son*  
*"Merlene": Merlene (Vander Wagen) Richardson*



The VanderWagen family (1939): Augie ("Van") & Lenore, Roger ("Brother"), Nancy, Rose Marie ("Sis") and Merlene  
 Photo: Myrtle Warner Photo Album