

*Many who paddle through canoe country one week a year fantasize about living here year round. This account throws a healthy dose of reality into that romantic image. No matter what the lifestyle or where you call home, every place has its challenges. Living in the Northwoods is no exception. Hopefully, life on the Gunflint Trail and Saganaga Lake will return to normal this spring. It's still a beautiful, wild place for us all to enjoy.*

## **The Gunflint Fire: Division Chief Bill Payne and the “Saganaga Six”**

by **Marco Manzo III and Helen Sue Manzo**

What follows is an eyewitness account of the **Ham Lake Fire / Gunflint Fire:** the fire fighting campaign that occurred on the Canadian side of Saganaga Lake, and the story of the **“Saganaga Six,”** the locals who stayed to assist the Canadian fire fighting teams. One of which is an 85-year-old man who tirelessly fought for two days and two nights manning fire hoses to save his property. This account also tells the story of **Saganaga Lake's hero,** the **OMNR's** [Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources] **Division Chief Bill Payne,** who, by air, waged a valiant battle defending the **“Saganaga Six,”** Red Pine Island, along with many other islands and numerous values. This battle hit its peak on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

On Sunday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, after the Ham Lake Fire swept through the Seagull Lake and Seagull River region and also along the south end of Saganaga Lake, wrecking great devastation, Marco Manzo III of Sagonto Resort at Red Pine Island on the Canadian side of Saganaga Lake called OMNR officials. He notified them Sagonto was available and ready to offer the use of lodging facilities, boats and motors and the Sagonto family's assistance at no charge should the fire encroach on the Canadian side of Saganaga.

By Wednesday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, OMNR Conservation Officer Axel Nowak was flown to Saganaga in a turbo Beaver to assess the situation for evacuation on the Canadian side of the lake. Marco met the Beaver with a boat and ferried Officer Nowak to Pine Island to converse with Saganaga's 85-year-old fire warden, Irv Benson. Before Officer Nowak flew out, an initial reserve of gasoline was deposited at Sagonto for the expected arrival of the OMNR fire fighting teams.

Marco was instructed on May 10<sup>th</sup> to meet former OMNR Conservation Officer Bob Stewart and pilot Craig Burch, scheduled to fly into Saganaga in the turbo Beaver, to act as the evacuation team. The evening before, Officer Bob Stewart informed the Sagonto family there might be three teams of fire fighters who would lodge and eat at Sagonto, and if needed, he could bring a food order with the Beaver. The Manzo family purchased food which was delivered by the aircraft.

After the evacuation team arrived and had settled in at Sagonto, Marco escorted the men around the lake to ascertain who remained at Saganaga. On Friday,

May 11<sup>th</sup>, two trips were planned to fly out the remaining evacuees; most people had already departed by way of the Gunflint Trail during the first evacuation wave on May 6<sup>th</sup>.

The six people who then remained on the Canadian side of Sag were Irv Benson and the family at Sagonto, which consisted of 85-year-old Virginia “Dinna” Madsen (widow of the late Art Madsen—the first to settle on the Canadian side of Saganaga Lake in 1931); Dinna's son-in-law and daughter, Marc and Helen Sue Manzo, and their adult children Marco Manzo III (30) and Alesha Manzo (26). Irv Benson was determined to stay to assist and fight. Sagonto's family also decided to stay for the same reasons, plus they knew the lake with which the teams were not familiar. Saganaga is approximately 20 miles long by 20 miles wide with 300 islands and numerous unexpected glacial rocks and reefs which make it a navigational challenge even for those who are familiar with the lake.

Before the last evacuees were flown out, the initial Canadian fire teams with their equipment began arriving on Sag via helicopter and were dropped off on a large reef about ½ mile to the west of Sagonto. The Manzo family met and ferried the crews to Sagonto, which was set up as the staging and distribution area. They then continued to meet helicopter drops of fire pumps (68 lbs. each), fire hose packs, sprinkler and tool kits, and many five gallon “Jerry” cans of gasoline, cases of oil, axes and chain saws.

Sagonto's docks and front shore were piled high with bright red OMNR equipment. As team members stepped out on the shore, they literally broke out into a run; they had flown over the area and had observed how rapidly the fire was advancing. They informed the Manzo's, “It doesn't look good.” The OMNR teams adamantly impressed that it was not a matter of “if” the fire was coming; it WAS coming. The Manzo's were told that they would soon need to sink everything possible, boats, canoes and propane tanks. The family quickly distributed local maps with more detail than the maps the teams had with them and then offered advice as to which cabins around the lake they believed were in the greatest danger and should be covered first—which were about four miles to the east in Red Sucker Bay.

After observing the logistics, the teams and Marco loaded boats for a team to head to Red Sucker Bay, where they began setting up sprinkler systems on each of the values there by cutting and limbing downed trees to erect as poles on which to mount the sprinklers. Another team remained at Sagonto, and with Marc and Alesha's help, the sprinklers were installed on all the cabins. The teams continued the fast pace throughout the day, working indefatigably.

Art Madsen had once been a fire warden, and over the years he had purchased fire pumps and fire hose, so the family had been regularly spraying down the cabins and property as far as they could, ever since the fire had gone through the south end of the lake five days prior.

At 6:00 p.m. the teams were radioed with a change of

plans that they were to be picked up at 7:00 p.m., to be transported elsewhere. They were disappointed as they were unable to continue working to get more accomplished. In order to meet the helicopter at the scheduled pick up time, Marco hurried back with the crew from Red Sucker Bay.

On the morning of May 12<sup>th</sup> three teams were flown in with a quick helicopter “buzz” over Sagonto as the “cue” to get ready to meet the teams at the landing zone. When the teams had nearly finished covering their objective for the day it was nearing their pickup time, but Marco asked if it was at all possible for them to install sprinklers at Phil Sakry's at the east end of Red Pine Island and Irv Benson's cabins. Marco ferried part of a team to set up the sprinklers at Sakry's, but they were then out of time. With Marco's prodding, they left the remaining sprinkler kits at Irv's Island and also at Bob Robinson's Island, a short distance from Sakry's cabin. Leaving the sprinkler kits at Irv's would prove to be fortuitous the following day.

**The greatest battle on Saganaga was brought to the fore on May 13<sup>th</sup>—Mothers' Day.** It was a day of heightened concern and anxiety, and all continued at an emergency pace. The Manzo's and the fire teams feverishly worked to protect all the areas that were now threatened. By 8:00 that Sunday morning, with the fire continuing its path towards the Canadian side of Saganaga from Maraboeuf Lake and sweeping up the southeast mainland and farther up the B.W.C.A.W. corridor of Saganaga—suddenly, open flames erupted in Leaning Pine Bay on the mainland of the U.S. side, just ½ mile across from Sagonto. From there the fire began jumping the islands to the west: Campers' Island, Sly Island, and then to Horseshoe Island. It had also reached the southern shores of Red Sucker Bay with the 1999 Blowdown acting as ready tinder, and it was even burning new-growth areas previously burned in the 1995 fire.

The teams arrived later that morning, informing the Manzo's the winds were to increase in intensity from the southeast, driving the fire toward the islands to the southeast of Red Pine Island. The OMNR fire teams' orders were: **no other values were to have sprinklers installed—time had run out.** The teams were only to use the time to resupply all the existing pumps with fuel, and because of the danger they were to be airlifted out at 2:00 p.m. If they stayed any later, the chopper pilots could not guarantee they would be able to land to pick up the teams in the growing smoke and forecasted high winds.

In the task of resupplying each fire pump, the OMNR had a unique set up of two, 5-gallon Jerry cans at each fire pump with a “Y” connection and a system of priming both tanks so the fire pumps would run for twelve hours on a heavy oil mix of 24:1 with the 10 gallons of gasoline. At this point in time, several hundred gallons of gasoline had already been picked up, mixed with oil, and distributed repeatedly to resupply the pumps to keep the sprinklers operational. In theory, the sprinkler systems only needed to be running a minimum of four hours to raise the RH (relative humidity) around

the values, creating a bubble in the atmosphere with low oxygen content, so the heat of the fire would “bounce off” the bubble. Every sprinkler system had been kept running continuously for the past two days—over 36 hours.

Marc, Marco and Alesha transported gasoline and hurried to ferry crews as quickly as possible to resupply all pumps and restart them. Helen Sue stayed at Sagonto to coordinate and work there. Alesha took a crew to resupply and restart the pumps at Red Sucker Bay. The crew later informed her, as they observed flying out—the return route from resupplying those pumps was impassible due to the smoke and fire just twenty minutes after they had been there.

The crews were ferried to the extraction point for the 2:00 p.m. deadline. Wanting to be sure the teams had been picked up, Marco traveled once more to the reef, coined “gasoline island” by the crews. The route was then thick from the smoke with the fires burning on Horseshoe Island; and he had to close his eyes and hold his breath and hold his heading for approximately 200 yards to get past custom's island to the landing zone. After discovering the teams had been safely airlifted out, Marco crossed back through the thick stretch of smoke and headed back to Sagonto.

Then, looking to the east past Sagonto, Marco spotted flames which had surfaced on the mainland and then jumped across to Conner's Island just to the southeast of Red Pine Island. He hurried to the dock and raced to warn the family, because he remembered that Art Madsen, his grandfather had cautioned during the fire of 1995 that Red Pine Island and Sagonto could be in imminent danger if the fire jumped to Conner's Island.

Irv Benson had previously discussed with Marco where he could be found should he have to evacuate, and the Manzo family had prepared three evacuation routes. In addition, Marco had promised Irv he would get word to him if any of the family were to evacuate or if the fire were to head his way. Dinna, at age 85, wouldn't be able to run to a boat at the last minute, so it was time to prepare for evacuation for the three women for the night; but Marc and Marco planned to stay and fight to the last minute.

[One evacuation option, which the men would perhaps need to use, was a plan the family had pre-arranged with a float plane company to pick them up on “the Big Lake” (the largest open expanse on Sag is referred to as “the Big Lake”). Marco had called and given them the coordinates and information earlier that day and asked them to keep all the information on record as they would only be able to give momentary notice, but to wait for their signal, and the rendezvous was planned for a specific location and Irv would fly out with them.]

Helen Sue and Alesha hurriedly packed and began loading a boat in preparation to leave and travel five miles down the lake to stay at the home of the family friend, Bob Monehan. Bob had stayed and fought to save his home surrounded by flames one week prior.

Marco left to warn Irv. As he traveled to head up the usual channel to the east to Irv's, he discovered that the fire had already jumped to the big island the family was on—the 420 acres of Red Pine Island. He knew that it would be impossible to travel or breathe through the thick smoke, so he turned around and headed in the opposite direction to the west. Instead of using the back channel around the island, where there are many rocks and reefs, and even more so in the low water, Marco circled around by way of the “Big Lake.” He knew if he hit a rock in the back channel, there would not be time to paddle miles in the midst of the fire.

Pulling up to Irv's shore at Pine Island, Marco exclaimed, **“Irv! The fire is coming! It is already on our island and heading this way. The women are evacuating—what do you want to do?”**

Irv replied, “Marco, how are you doing?”

At that moment Marco was hit with the realization that the familiar, beautiful scenery of Saganaga was being changed. The thought of the possibility of losing cabins became overwhelming, and caused him to momentarily choke up. He responded, “I’m trying to maintain my composure.”

As a distraction for both of them, Marco said, “Irv, I have an extra nozzle. How about if we get a “Y” connection going on your fire pump and spray down your yard?” As they began hosing down the yard together, Marco remarked, “Irv, there are sprinkler kits, here.” Irv replied that he didn't know anything about setting those up. Because Marco had been working with the crews, he told Irv, “I think I can do it.”

Where there may be four to eight persons on a fire team setting up for three cabins, with only Irv's help handing up equipment and hoses and holding the ladder, Marco was able to set up and install all the sprinklers on all three of Irv's cabins within the next hour and a half. Soon afterwards, Marco called out, **“Irv, look! The fire has reached the south end of your island, and is already here in the bay!”**

During this time the helicopters had buzzed the remaining family members at Sagonto to check on them. Later, Division Chief Bill Payne told Marco that from the air, they had seen the fire travel up the channel towards Phil Sakry's cabin. The helicopter went for a bucket, but by the time it returned the convection currents were so strong, turbulence kept throwing the helicopter back. They were unable to fight the blaze—even though the flames had not reached the cabin.

The fire then jumped to Irv's and also the next island beyond Irv's, at Dick Taylor's, a quarter of a mile jump across the water. The helicopter was successful in dumping three buckets to arrest the flareup at Taylor's which had been close to his cabin, then returned to Irv's to finish bucketing.

**By 6:00 or 7:00 p.m., the fire had traveled a quarter of the way across Red Pine Island. Division Chief Bill Payne, in the air on board one helicopter, directed the attack. Helicopters #44 and #50 worked to protect the**

**family at Sagonto and all the remaining values on the island. As a last resort, he planned to “fight fire with fire” working ahead of the fire about one third of the way across Red Pine Island. However, the fire was traveling so rapidly, he had to direct the attack at the half-way point across the island,** where there is a natural break—or low area in the island that runs from north to south. With mixing and ignition crews on board, they dropped fire strips similar to Napalm to burn up the fuel ahead of the fire, then began bucketing to put out the fire to keep the wind-driven blaze from heading towards Sagonto and across the remainder of the island.

Helen Sue, Alesha and Dinna were ready to leave, and helicopters were staying close overhead, but they wanted to be sure Marco was all right and had not been caught in the fire and smoke. Marc left to check on Marco, now traveling the normal route to the east and up the channel from the rock pile—counterclockwise around Red Pine Island. Nearing Phil's cabin, Marc was horrified to witness Phil's cabin in a high blaze of fire.

Arriving at Irv's, Marc related the sad news about Phil's cabin, and then told them that the women needed to evacuate, but were waiting to hear Marco was unharmed. Marco said he had just finished, and would head right home. Marc departed but first told Marco to follow the same route he was taking, so should something happen, Marc would know which way to search for Marco. Before Marco left Irv's, he remembered that he and his dad had planned to help Irv launch his dock, so he and Irv first launched his dock. Irv was prepared to evacuate, and already had his boat loaded with the contents covered with a tarp. Irv told Marco that was about it, and that if he needed to leave, Marco knew where to find him.

When Marco returned, the women were ready for departure, and with all the pumps running the sound was deafening. Marc idled down the pump on the front dock and said a prayer asking for protection for Irv and the family and deliverance for the area. The three generations of women then departed. For Dinna, who had been on Saganaga since her marriage in 1946, Helen Sue who had been raised there and Alesha, who had spent a good part of her life at Sagonto—it was a somber time as they left the dock.

As they waved good-bye, the women were proud beyond words of both Marc and Marco who were remaining to stand alone to defend the island. That night there would be just three men who remained on that end of the lake—Irv, Marc and Marco. Marc sank canoes and anchored propane bottles in the back bay, and they prepared to take hoses to fight at the back of the property should the fire travel any closer.

As the women departed by boat, the helicopters were fighting in rapid succession nearby. Breathing through the smoke was a concern. Taking Irv's advice, Helen Sue had cut a wool blanket in pieces to place over their faces to filter out the smoke and aid in their breathing. Reaching their friend's home, the women communicated by radio to Marc and Marco that they had arrived safely. Later that night, Marc and Marco took two boats in the

dark to check on Irv to make sure the fire wasn't spreading. They took two boats, should one motor cut out, or if one boat or motor were to hit an unexpected dead head or floating charred tree. They witnessed what resembled 1000 "campfires" on Red Pine Island and burning up the channel towards Irv's, but they were encouraged because it looked from the shore like the fire wasn't advancing any farther across Red Pine Island.

Five miles away, it was a sleepless night for Helen Sue, but the next day she was overjoyed to learn that after they had evacuated, the helicopters had continued to fight, getting much done before nightfall halted their work. **It was through Division Chief Bill Payne's relentless and determined efforts and command tactics with helicopters #44 and #50, that the fire on Red Pine Island was arrested just a quarter mile from Sagonto. The remainder of Red Pine Island, Sagonto and all the other values had been miraculously spared.**

Early the next morning, Monday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, a helicopter appeared over the front shore of Sagonto. Garry Harland, the #2 in command under the Incident Commander Dave Manol, executed a hover exit. Operations Section Chief Harland yelled over the din to Marc and Marco, "You're not evacuating?"

The men replied, "No, we're staying—just the women left for the night."

Chief Harland said, "I wanted to make sure you were still here. More teams and equipment are returning to the lake. Are the boats still available?"

Marco told him that they were ready and he would radio his mother and sister and have them return to help. Helen Sue left Bob Monehan's dock at 8:00 o'clock a.m., and was stopped when she reached the Narrows, where she was provided an official escort to travel back up the lake. Late in the day Marco ferried Dinna and Alesha back to Sagonto.

That Monday, even though the greatest danger was past, many fires continued burning on Red Pine Island and numerous other islands were still pluming with fire and smoke—including Horseshoe Island. Later that day, a U.S. helicopter bomber, which filled its tank through an intake hose while hovering, worked on Horseshoe Island for five hours and helped to ensure that the fire didn't jump to the chain of islands to the northwest.

Two Canadian fire teams arrived with instructions that Sagonto would now be their base, and they would lodge there for the next week. The teams' primary objectives were to work the fire lines at Taylor's Island, Irv's Pine Island, and Red Pine Island. Whereas the helicopter had been successful in arresting the blazes the night before just 25 feet from Taylor's cabin, the fire had continued to slowly grow in the ground and was now only 15 feet from the cabin. Irv had stayed up and worked all night, holding back the fire which had burned within 100 feet of his southern-most cabin. Irv continued manning the hoses to protect the back of his property throughout Monday night, also. When he saw Marco, he said, "I'm dead on my feet."

One of the teams brought to Sagonto was needed to work at Taylor's and Irv's while the other team worked the fire line on Red Pine Island from opposite shores and met in the middle. They then continued to widen the line each day. In the extreme drought conditions, the fire was burning deeply into the ground following roots. The teams used the nozzle stream to cut through the ground to the rock at the edge of the burn to halt the spread of the fire in the ground. It took numerous hose packs to stretch across the wide island. With chain saws and axes and working in hazardous conditions, the teams felled blackened and dangerous snags (trees burned and ready to fall). The temperatures dropped to 28°F., and there were three skiffs of snow throughout the day.

After working the lines all day, the crews arrived back at the docks late in the evening covered from head to foot with black ash. After showering, they came over to the Dining Room to warm up and have a hot meal. Earlier that same morning, these teams had been flown out to work at areas north of Thunder Bay, but due to the concern for the family on Red Pine Island, they appealed to their superiors to be brought back to Saganaga. Marco, who had been in the woods with them all day in the freezing temperatures, planned to eat dinner with the teams, and it was a special moment during grace, as he said, "Thank you for these teams...to which we owe our lives."

The following week, there were still three more days of "high alert." In the middle of the week, CBC television came in to film the crews who had been staying at Sagonto and were working the line on Red Pine Island, which aired in Thunder Bay that evening.

On Friday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, Bill Payne took the Manzo's for a "flip" in a helicopter to view how, just five days prior, the incredible fighting campaign had operated by air. The family was able to view all the areas where the helicopters had fought so valiantly.

During the ensuing days, there continued to be much air traffic and continual hot spots were found by helicopters' and ground-based infrared scans which directed crews until every hot spot was out. Many fire teams from the U.S. side came up to assist and take down sprinklers. The Manzo's were then needed to help ferry all the equipment that had been taken down back to "gasoline island" for pickup.

Division Chief Bill Payne, after being on duty for the duration of the fire, was ready to take his leave. But first he brought in his replacement and new Division Chief Larry Brandt and Information Officer Rick Reynen for the family to meet. On Tuesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Gunflint Trail was reopened ending the 17 days of Martial Law and wildfire trauma.

The OMNR had been simultaneously fighting over 400 fires north of Thunder Bay, and manned an evacuation of over 300 in one area. Their resources were stretched very thin, as many helicopters and all water bombers that would have been made available for Saganaga Lake had been "timed out" and were down for extensive

maintenance. In spite of the numerous regions the OMNR had to cover, they allocated many helicopters, personnel and resources to Saganaga Lake.

*We are grateful to God for His intervention and for all the prayers that were answered.*

[The Manzo's have numerous photos and video of "The Gunflint Fire" campaign of which a sampling will be posted at [www.sagonto.com/fire](http://www.sagonto.com/fire).]

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**The following is a sample of letters which were sent expressing gratitude for the fire fighting efforts.**

*A reply Email sent from Division Chief Bill Payne:*

August 22, 2007

Bill Payne  
RE: The Gunflint Fire:  
Canadian side of Saganaga Lake account

Hey Marco,  
I'm sorry I took so long to reply, I've been busy fighting fires out in Quebec and back here in the Fort Frances district.

I flew over Red Pine Island a few weeks ago in a helicopter. We were on a loaded patrol looking for fires and I figured that I would do a fly by (my way of saying hello).

I hope all is well with you and the family. We certainly appreciated your hospitality.

I read the article and it seems very well done. You must have spent many hours working on it. I was hoping to visit with the family this summer but things got a little too busy, maybe next summer.

Please say hello to your family for me and best wishes to all of you. Hope to talk to you soon.

Bill Payne

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July 9, 2007

From: Marco Manzo III  
To: Bill Payne  
Subject: The Gunflint Fire:  
Canadian side of Saganaga Lake account

Dear Mr. Payne,

Thank you again so very much for all you have done for us.

A summary account was just printed in a local paper this morning and featured the photo of my family and you before the helicopter ride and also a photo of Irv Benson witnessing the flames spread on his island.

I hope this full account meets with your approval.  
[www.sagonto.com/fire](http://www.sagonto.com/fire) Please feel free to forward this link on to all that would be interested.

We all at Sagonto hope that you and your family will be able to come and stay very soon!

Please call anytime: 218-370-1074

Best Regards,  
--- Marco Manzo III  
Sagonto

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May 31, 2007

Dear Manzo's,

Don and I want to thank you for all your efforts in protecting Sag, our cabins and islands from the fire. We all treasure Sag and are so thankful the area survived with much thanks to you all and the others. We can only imagine the worry, exhaustion and efforts you experienced.

Again our deepest thanks.

Lenore Danielson and Don McLeod

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August 2007

To Our Friends at Sagonto,

My wife, family and I cannot thank you enough for all you have done for Irv and our beautiful Lake Saganaga. It is true that your family is a blessing for this lake.

Your work, your sacrifices and your time has not gone unnoticed. Please accept this small token as our small way of saying "thank you."

With our sincere gratitude,

Ty and Dacia Bestor

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August 6, 2007

Dear Dinna, Marc, Helen Sue, Marco & Alesha,

An overdue thank you from our family to yours for all the phone calls and updates you gave us during the Gunflint Fire. They were the only accounts I knew were accurate and your encouragement is what got Ty and I up there.

When Marco called me at 10:30 p.m. Mothers' Day and told me Irv's island was burning we knew the trouble we were in. If Irv, Marco and MNR chopper pilot Bill Payne hadn't fought for his island the way they did our island

would have been gone.  
Indebted to you forever,

Robby and Patty  
'Robinson's Island'

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October 18, 2007

Dear Helen Sue Manzo,

Thank you for the brochure and excellent letter.  
I am very grateful to you people and Irv Benson for your great help and bravery during that devastating fire. I felt so helpless. I prayed a lot.  
No way [would] people rebuild if [the] fire [had] not [been] stopped. Then rebuild on what? scorched earth!

I was on fire crews in the CCC's -- ran for my life a couple of times. Forest fires are terrible.

Thanks to all of you.

Yours truly,

Norm Horton Sr.

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April 3, 2008

My Dear Marco,

The books—your mom's letter and pictures came today. I sat right down and went through them all. I'd say you were a hero in the fire!!! —

The magazines are now at Earl Jorgensons—I'm sure your grandma will remember him!

Helen Sue—I'm most grateful. I look forward to seeing all the "new" Sagonto—and all of you.

...I'm fine and expect to golf and fish this summer—Both Earl and I are 87.

Thanks again. Hope this gets to you...

All the Best, Regards,

Roy Watson

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September 24, 2007

Dear Dinna,

It is with great gratitude that I write this letter. I only recently learned of all you and your family did during the fire in May. Irv had me listen to the tape of the journal and then I looked it up on line. You must be very proud of your family and I'm sure that Art... [would be] beaming with pride.

...Marco, with all his various activities of the last few

years, and especially this year, has shown that he has some of that same spirit that brought Art to Sag. Marco has earned his place in the history of Saganaga.

I certainly don't diminish in any way the contributions of Helen Sue and Marc and, of course yourself in taking care of the firefighters and all that was done in fighting the fire.

I first came to Sag in 1950 when we owned the old Thunder Bay Camp at the end of the long portage to Saganags. I was quite young and in awe of the beauty. We moved to Saganaga in 1960 on what had been Plummer Island. In 1980, I bought the place alone and plan on leaving it to my children. I believe that in those 57 years I may have missed 1 or 2 years of not being up there. I still have those same feelings I had as a young boy. My wife refers to it as "our little corner of paradise."

What you and your family did was truly an unselfish act. Your actions and efforts were benefitting all of the property owners. I'm especially thankful for the help and watchfulness that Marco gave to Irv. As I read the journal, I frequently teared up and felt tingles. You were all wonderful.

Your generosity of not charging the OMNR for what you did was wonderful. I see that as something that benefitted all of us on the lake. With that in mind, I hope you will accept the enclosed check as helping to support the efforts that were put forth. It seems so small in comparison to what you and your family did.

Thank you, again for all you have done. May God Bless You and Yours and watch over you and keep you safe.

With fond regards,

Dick Taylor

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