

Return to Shangri La

NORMA MESSMER

My hand groped over the weather beaten pine door for the rusty lock which would unfold our "Shangri La." Meeting no resistance from the tiny device, I proceeded blindly to feel for the light switch which would show the way for the rest of our crew. As my searching hand passed over fuses, wires, switches, and knobs, I was conscious of the "special" cabin aroma, a composition of ant killer, mouse poison, ashes from last week's wiener roast, and the "springy" scent of the fresh, exhilarating Lake Hollybrook air.

While waiting for the rest to follow me in, I glanced involuntarily around and was again impressed with the picturesque beauty of our vacation spot: the living room with its high rafters, the unique lighting system (an old wagon wheel converted into a spherical chandelier which had served us for many years), the lounges and leather chairs all over the living room. The outstanding feature, the huge, gray, stone fireplace stretched over the east living room wall, brought back memories of the welcomed warmth on cool, summer evenings, those ice-skating sprees, and evening swims in the brisk water, without which our cabin would fail to be Shangri La.

Our crew decided to retire early for on the next day we were planning to undertake the man-sized job of cleaning the cabin for summer occupation. Our sleep was unpleasantly interrupted, however, by a violent storm which broke

around midnight. The thunder, first faintly heard over the lake, soon developed into a terrific roar whose vibration seemed to threaten the stable foundation of the cabin. We shuddered and flinched as the slender fire-like streaks of lightning flashed across the sky. The raging wind came and with it the torrents of rain. We had just been congratulating ourselves upon being so safe and snug in our little nest when PLUNK—something wet hit me on the nose. At the same time my aunt exclaimed that she felt "something." Almost instantly we saw a small puddle forming on the table top. It was soon obvious that our roof had developed leaks and that our cozy nest was a wet one. We flew to the kitchen and withdrew from the cupboard the entire stock of pots and pans. Wash-tubs were withdrawn from hibernation. Buckets used to carry our drinking water were emptied and placed over the dining table where the constant brass-like sounds of PLUNK PLUNK sounded from the back door to front. The seating capacity in all chairs was for dishpans only, and on the top of the radio was perched the porcelain wash bowl.

After the severity of the storm had lessened, we hopped into bed and it dawned upon me that I had failed to write mother, as I had promised, upon my arrival. I drew the candle closer (the electricity had been cut off) and wrote, "Dear Mother, Having a wonderful time. Wishing you were here. Love, Norma."