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LAZY DAY AT THE LITTLE MULCHATNA LODGE ON FISHTRAP LAKE ALASKA

If one flew over the Little Mulchatna lodge in the Green and White Cessna that my Father owns,

they would see my Home. The place that has shaped my life in the best ways always. As the

plane flies over the Lodge, what is seen is the main Lodge on Top of a large hill with a carved

path that, as one follows it, witnessing a bathhouse perched in a great spot with the door facing

the Lake.

All the doors of all the cabins face the Lake except one entrance to the Main Lodge. Then one

continues past the porch of the Bathhouse with its smaller windows giving a nod to Privacy. At

the front of the Bathhouse is a covered porch just enough space for a hammock, which in this

case is occupied by my brother Scott and then his faithful black lab Kizzy resting close by. After

all, this year was 1980 and a special day indeed. His books spread out comfortably on a chair, a

cold drink in his hand. My brother Scott at the age of 15, starting to become a man but not quite

there yet. Seeing me his baby sister at age ten his face lights up as

I have come walking up the path wearing only a swimsuit and holding a towel fresh from

swimming in the Lake. My lips are blue even with the hot weather as Fish Trap Lake is glacier

fed and ice chunks float by at times in the summer from the Glaciers on the mountains that

surround the Lake.

He moved up from the Hammock hearing both our names called, our faithful black labs and we

moved along the path towards the back of the Bathhouse, his dog named Kizzy and my dog

named Sweetheart. The dogs were related cousins as all our Black labs were related from the

same family deliberately raised to be faithful, loyal companions, and duck hunters as well.

This is where pushed up against the back of the Bathhouse is the vast Ice Maker. The Ice Maker is

which is used in the summer for making ice. Also, for keeping sodas, beer and other items cold

in the heat of the summer.

An extra fridge stands next to the Icemaker silent in the winter but full and noisy in the summer.

Then there is a large grill set up complete with a chopping board and lots of space. Currently, my

Father Stu Ramstad, an infamous Alaskan Bush Pilot, stood as king to his kingdom. The weather

was gorgeous, and this day was a beautiful day,

It was merely the family at Home. My Father Stu, my Stepmom Wendy, my three brothers Scott,

David, and RJ and our half a dozen black labs, my six summer chickens that would not winter

here. The chickens were let out during the day but cooped up inside. My Father and my Mother

divorced when I was two years old. The bees were attending to their beehive not far away,

helping to give us honey all summer. The small tomato and potato garden next to the herb garden

just off the beaten path provided some food for the summer.

But at this time, a smell wafted through the air, the scent of fish being grilled as a barbeque was

under way. After all, this day was my brother Scott's birthday, and it was a perfect day. A pile of

presents waited inside

The Kitchen built with big picture windows deliberately towards the Lake. For example, animals

like the beaver and the porcupine trundling up the path in search of food, the squirrels and birds

darting around being squirrels and birds. The Kitchen stood with a porch out in front of it, a

welcoming addition a place to hang out in lawn chairs, hearing the radio from the Kitchen and

eating comfortably on the outside deck. To the side of the deck though was the entrance to the

gigantic sprawling living room with its big picture windows, entryway, this came complete with

a bearskin on the floor several couches and chairs comfortably spread out, then

Attached to the living area was the dining room with its long table that could feed about 16

People Comfortably. Then a slight hallway into the Kitchen makes for a three-sided wrap-around

main lodge with a large porch. After the barbeque, the family naturally moved inside for the

presents.

My brother Scott got many great gifts, but the one I remember most keen is the one I got for him,

a pair of flippers and a snorkeling mask along with some swim trunks, swim towel and a swim

bag complete with Sunscreen, bug spray, a plastic water bottle, and some snacks. At that

moment, my family was my best friend, including my Brother Scott, who beamed at all the gifts

he was given delighted in my offerings. Scott loved to swim, and he had been wanting to explore

the Beaver lodge that was only a few meters down the path on the Lake.

He asked me if that afternoon, I would explore the Beaver lodge with him, and I naturally

agreed. As the day wore on, I made my way to the three-sided outhouse down the path set

between the Bores nest cabin and the middle Cabin. This three-sided outhouse faced away from

the Lodge; The outhouse was towards the mountains, absolutely lovely in the summer but not in

the winter. The noise of the generator is always going. The funny noises the generator would make

in the summer when the ice would drop from the Ice Maker as it fell.

The three cabins were laid out in a specific pattern on the hill to the side of the Main Lodge on

the mountain. The Boars nest so named was the first Cabin this is where the family was

headquartered when we had company, after all our livelihood in the summer, was to bring people

out to go fishing from our Fly-in Fishing lodge.

Then sprawling along the well-groomed path halfway down the hill was what we called the

Middle Cabin. Simply stocked with a small wood stove and enough bunks for about eight-ten

people with two double Beds, four bunk beds, and some wooden drawers and even a rug with a

little rocking chair make up this Cabin. It has small windows; it is for sleeping and storage that's

all purely functional.

Then after visiting the three-sided outhouse, I made my way down past the middle Cabin down

the hill Headed down the path closer to Fish Trap Lake and the Little Mulchatna Lodge. But I

was headed towards the front Cabin where I was staying while we had no guests on property.

Fish trap lake down the hill connected to the Little Mulchatna River always presents a significant

part of my childhood. The river itself alive with schools of fish spawning, laying eggs, on this

bright, beautiful day. The bridge that connected both sides of the river firmly in place. This

bridge sits right in front of the front Cabin.

The front Cabin sits above a hill facing the Lake easily the prettiest Cabin the only sleeping

cabin with Sprawling big windows facing the Lake; small stove stocked even in the

summer-ready to fire in a moment's notice. A small garden sprawled next to the Front Cabin, this

one full of carrots and other assorted items. One needs that grow well here, along with some

herbs all behind a small fence complete with carved Paths and small bench that doubled as

storage of assorted garden tools and implements complete with Watering cans, gloves, and so on.

But I was quickly in and out my faithful dog Sweetheart with me as always like a constant black

shadow, my Best friend. She protected me from bears, moose and others in our world. I always

felt safe and secure around that dog.

This day though in the warm afternoon sun, I quickly grabbed my snorkeling mask, flippers, and

a fresh Towel. My excitement could not be contained as I ran along the path does not back up the

hill, but the way that was next to the Lake, then past the dock where my Father's Cessna 185 lay

another necessary Part of our world. After all, this was our transportation, a vital link to the rest

of Alaska and the World.

This was a fun day as I met up with my brother Scott and his dog Kizzy, Scott had changed to his

new Swim trunks, his skinny body filling them out. He had his swim bag and, of course, the ever

present rifle that was always a part of our world.

But today, I was not thinking of that I was focused on getting in the water and exploring the

Beaver Lodge. But most of all, spending time with my big brother Scott. After checking around

for any critters that might be lurking; we splashed in the water. There were beavers in the lake

gathering sticks and teaching Their new babies how to swim.

The beavers were not alarmed about the noise as we were a part of their world. My Father had

built the Lodge in 1959, and in 1980 several generations of beavers had adapted to us being

around. On this day, not a cloud in the sky was about, and the sun beat down heating the water,

especially the shallow areas around the Lodge.

My brother's RJ and David took the skiff out on the Lake to go fishing on the sprawling Lake

and to keep watch just in case, as an example, bears showed up to bother us. But on this day no

bears showed only a lone moose swimming across the Lake to get to the other side, perhaps to

escape the mosquitoes that buzz around.

My Father sat on a lawn chair just in front of the Bathhouse facing the Lake. He had a gun in

hand and a small cooler of Drinks next to him. My Stepmom Wendy attended her gardens happy

to have time to weed and plant and make sure the bees were well cared for after all their bee

home had to be a fortress to be protected from bears. This beehive was well protected inside a

three-sided shed high above the ground In the well-protected garden that was covered with

netting to keep the animals out, including the bears. The bees could dart in and out of the netting

without harm but harder for other animals to get in.

The thing others would have noticed is every human had a dog with them, my Brother RJ's dog.

At the time was Cledro, my brother, David's dog, was Bummer, my Father had his dog Ollie Pup

2, and stepmom Wendy had her dog, Heidi, all the dogs except for Heidi where black labs. Heidi

was a huge Loveable saint Bernard that Wendy had gotten when she was born. Heidi was

occupied by her Son Jack another Saint Bernard.

The other two dogs in the Pack Hammer and Nails were hanging out under some shade down by

the Lake Trying to keep a watch on everyone. My two brothers and their two dogs in the skiff,

My dog is in the water next to me and Kizzy, my brother scots dog in the water with him as well.

These were the water dogs so Happy as can be.

One memory that stands out for both of us was sitting still in the water and watching the four

adults Beavers and the four kits come lazily back to their Lodge their Home with sticks in their

mouths. The adult Beavers where two mated pairs and a part of three generations of beavers

accompanying the Beaver Lodge.

The beavers knew we were no threat as in their memory on this Lake, none of them had ever

been hunted Or trapped since the Little Mulchatna Lodge was built. They swam casually up to

their Lodge is not getting too close, though. These were not our pets though we knew them, and

They knew us. One of the four kits was curious and got closer wanting to see us more clearly. We

let them get close watching with bated Breath.

The curious Kitt got close looking into my eyes, assessing just as curious as me, only a few

inches separated Me and this curious beaver. I felt no fear, and neither did I think the beaver kitt

did either. One of the Adults made a sharp click noise and slapped their tail the ripple sounding

across the Lake. The beaver kitt made a gurgling sound that seemed like "Aww man" picking

up the stick it had dropped when coming closer. The kitt with one last look turned and swam

over to the inpatient adult beaver. Then with a splash, the beavers were underwater after all the

entrance to their Lodge was underwater protected from most predators.

Our dogs did not move a muscle either sensing no threat or well used to the beavers as the

beavers were to the dogs. The dogs had all been slapped by beaver tail at one point or another

and wanted no part in That. But Beavers are not predators in the same way bears are. They might

eat fish, but that was the extent of it all.

Soon the day was winding down, and it was time to pack it in, and my brother Scott and I moved

back to shore with the dogs always with us. My Father moved from his spot once we were safe,

and we wondered up the path. My brother's RJ and David came back from fishing, and my

stepmom had gathered the leftovers from the barbeque earlier to make Dinner.

As we all gathered still eating outside on the deck in front of the Kitchen with a makeshift table

and chairs. I reflected on a perfect day as the rest of the Cake and some home-made ice cream

was Eaten. We all helped with clean up after Dinner, and I washed some dishes with my brother

RJ. Then it was time for a bath and sauna in the Bathhouse and time for reading and bed in the

Front Cabin.

What a perfect day I thought as I drifted off to sleep in the Front Cabin safe and snug with my

ever-faithful Black Lab Sweetheart next to me protecting me even as I slept soundly exhausted a

little girl of ten safe and secure with my family.