

THAT OLD MOOSE RIVER KEEPS ON ROLLING ALONG

March 26, 2002

Among the several blessings our family has had the good fortune to enjoy have been wholesome and unique home sites.

Our present, and for all the foreseeable future our last, is no exception. One might say it has been the focal point of our life and the overriding factor in the decision-making process in our pursuit of happiness.

This did not come about strictly by accident or luck of the draw. It was a combination of both and a concerted effort to provide the safest and healthiest environment for our family. It has taken precedence over rigid financial considerations. It's come as a natural to me as glancing down at the speedometer when a police car appears on the scene.

I agreed with my father's analogy of somewhat similar behavior on his part: "I would rather make myself a tin bill and pick dung (not his exact word) with the chickens before I would live like that."

I am reminded on a daily basis of the above pronouncement by merely gazing out the array of windows fronting our house. You never have the same view twice. Old friend Bill Bordock was the first to point that out to me on one of the many occasions we sat at my table enjoying a friendly cup of tea.

Our home faces the ever-moving Middle Branch of the Moose River. Situated on a bend below a stretch of rapids, the house sits on a wooded knoll some 50 feet from the water's edge. Over 100 yards of the river is visible before it wends its way downstream and out of sight in the thickly wooded banks below the house.

The ever-changing panorama provided by the moving water is augmented and enhanced by the many wildlife denizens that depend on it for sustenance, safety and habitat.

This is a particularly interesting time of year as nature works its changes on the landscape with a transition from winter's icy grip, which shields all but the most turbulent water from view with a white mantle. Every morning daylight answers my questions of the night before as to what if any alterations may take place in the dark of night. Curiosity many times spurs my early rising as with a child who can't wait until Christmas morning to open the presents.

I sat transfixed for most of one morning at the end of a long, hard winter that had cloaked the river's surface with thick layers of ice. A sudden change in the weather brought huge cakes of ice tumbling every which way into those that came before and creating huge ice dams that momentarily brought everything to a standstill.

Eventually, the crushing force brought against them ended the suspense and with a rush they continued the frantic race to their ultimate destination, only to be repeated a short time later.

Sitting there watching in fascination I contemplated the effects on river bottom and banks, on surrounding areas and wildlife. Much later when its fury had subsided, I was able to answer many of my questions and witness first-hand nature's, as I enjoyed the sights and sounds while pursuing the river's many varieties of fish. My quests have taken me as far as the boat-launching site at Castorland.

Mentioning the sounds of the river, I was abruptly reminded that I had left out one of its most unique assets. Located a short distance below legendary Minnehaha, a whistle stop on the Adirondack Railroad, the sounds of the rapids immediately above our house fulfill the prophecy promised by the name – Laughing Waters. When the weather warms and we can have the windows open we are serenaded by its mellifluous flow. It is therapy for the mind and soul after particularly hard days or troubled times.

A flash of brown darting furtively into the sanctuary of exposed tree roots on the far bank provided the impetus for this and next week's columns. Stay tuned and thanks for your continuing interest.