

## **DEATH OF CLARENCE FOSTER DIMINISHES THE ADIRONDACKS**

**March 2, 2004**

The Adirondacks lost a little more of its culture on February 13 when Long Lake resident Clarence Foster lost his short fight with a particularly virulent and aggressive cancer. Clarence embodied the true character I found in the early Adirondackers and their offspring when I settled here in 1958.

He was not born here, but the aptitude and qualities necessary to define my perceptions of what distinguished Adirondackers from others was always within him. I suppose that was my original thought when I encouraged and helped him make the transition with his family to this region.

As I sat in the Long Lake Wesleyan Church on February 16, these were just some of the many thoughts that went through my head. Looking around at the beautiful well-maintained church and the people gathered there to pay their respects to Clarence and his family, my impressions were only reaffirmed. They were in every sense of the word true contemporaries. It was then that I fully realized it was a good thing I had tried to do.

It was further encouraging to know as I looked at the front pews of the church where wife Phyllis, children and grandchildren sat, that the beat would go on. They, too, would continue to carry on as Clarence did the culture and character that so enamored me of the region. And that is encouraging to us who see that uniqueness disappearing.

A previous pastor and personal friend of Clarence's gave one of the most moving eulogies it has ever been my privilege to hear. As we visited with Pastor Greenlay in the town hall after the service, I found he shared my concern and had been acutely aware in the 17 years he had served the church of the erosion of the old culture. It is fast being supplanted by fast buck artists and those who disdain hunting, fishing, trapping and logging, the traditional means of making a living that no longer conform to their elitists outlook.

I realized also as I mingled with the several others paying their respects, with one exception, I had known Clarence longer than anyone there. Brother Tom has me by one year; he was the exception. We, my brothers and Clarence's, all frolicked together in the old dairy barn and environs of their farm.

They had an old goat that pulled us (in his own way, time, and direction) in an express wagon cart. And it was in their old farmhouse I obtained my first buzz on some especially tasty hard cider. I was an early teen and the cider was available on the table in pitchers to me and the other field hands at the dinner hour during the annual fall silo fillings. I knew not what hit me until I rose to leave the table and walked unsteadily into the doorjamb.

I became more aware of Clarence, who was some years younger than I, when he began to trap muskrats. My father bought many of the skins from him. Our friendship expanded after he married Phyllis, who was a classmate of my wife Nancy. She was my wife's maid of honor over 46 years ago when we were married and my wife reciprocated a month later when Phyllis and Clarence were married. Our sons, Mart and Bart, were born the following year.

Clarence and Phyllis were resident caretakers for 20 years back into Brandreth Lake. We renewed old ties occasionally when I made contact with them, usually over

Phyllis's homemade doughnuts, cookies or cake with coffee. The visits occurred during my trips to Brandreth Park where I helped administer an ongoing forestry program.

I will miss Clarence, but was pleased to learn as I observed the family, friends and neighbors at his service that I will not be alone and am in good company. Also that the traditions and standards he lived by will be alive and well in Long Lake for years to come.