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Lifetime of Conservation by Glen Face

In 1940, my parents began their married life without much more than the clothes on their back and a dream to build a life together. Each held a full-time job. They settled in rural Rensselaer County, living in a tent at first. They built their house by moonlight and on Sundays, the only days my father didn't work. Electricity wouldn't reach their corner of the world until 1943. The years brought Mom & Dad three sons and a large family dog, a big brown Chessie named Wool.

When the engine went bad on my father's '32 Chevy, he bought a similar Chevy for \$30 and moved the engine to his old car. He paid a shop \$8 to weld the remaining



frame into a trailer, complete with a hitch. Once home, he used his carpentry skills to build a four-foot-wide wooden trailer bed, complete with storage compartments. When my parents bolted an extra shelf on one side, it was just the right

size for our seven-foot-square "baker's" tent. **We had a camper!**

On Fourth of July weekend, 1951, we headed up Route 9 in a '49 Ford station wagon with real wood paneling, our camper in tow. We camped at Lake Durant and Piseco Lake that summer. The state campgrounds were all primitive; they had outhouses, no showers, and only one drinking water tap.

We positioned the trailer and erected the tent. We ran lines to nearby trees to keep the tent poles erect. Mom, Dad and my baby brother slept in the trailer bed. I slept up on the narrow side, which was about one foot wide. My older brother got the other side; *his* space was *two* feet wide! The one main tent flap was tied open all day and lowered at night. Wool kept guard, secured under the trailer.



One night a raccoon visited our site. When my father released Wool the next morning, the dog followed the trail of the nighttime visitor, and quickly went missing. A while later Dad saw a man

running as though he was being chased by a bear. He ran out of the woods and jumped into his car and Wool was right on his heels. Well, Dad gave a whistle; Wool stopped short, turned toward Dad with a quizzical look and returned to our site. The other man was about Dad's size and dressed similarly, so Wool may have thought he had found Dad.



Mom was an experienced Home Economics teacher, efficient in the kitchen, and usually very organized. Nonetheless, one time she forgot to pack any pots or pans. No matter, she did all the cooking over an open fire. This exemplified the generation that made do with what ever they had. Mom boiled the potatoes in the water pail, and corn-on-the-cob in a large metal wash pan.

Before my parents started camping, Mom wondered why the state would run campgrounds with taxpayer dollars and let people camp for free. Others must have felt the same way, because in 1951 the state started charging campers to use the campgrounds. They paid \$1.50 per night. There weren't a lot of organized activities but there was plenty of hiking, fishing, swimming, and water play.

My parents have always enjoyed the outdoors. Dad taught us to hunt and fish, and at 88 years of age, Mom still cooks whatever we bring home. They have been *Conservationist* subscribers since the first issue, dated August 1946. I know because they saved all the issues from the first five years. Those early issues provide very entertaining reading. A one-year subscription was \$1, payable in cash, check or postal money order. Single copies cost twenty cents. Conservation Commissioner Perry Duryea wrote about post-war forestry. Another article reminded readers to enjoy the "cheek-meat" and tongue of trout and bass. There was an article about raising varying hares, and another listed the state records for many types of fish.

Looking back fondly on a lifetime of enjoying the outdoors, Leon and Irene Face have cleaned out their closet, and are donating those first five years' worth of *Conservationist* magazines to DEC. Thanks for the memories.

Glen Face lives in Saratoga Springs and provided personal photos for this article.