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News & Comment for and by the Fishermen of Maine

FREE

The Mayor of Squaw Mountain

Old number one won't be stopping for the Mayor and his Ladyship at 'Friendly' Squaw Mountain any longer. Fact is chairs may never run at Squaw the way the operation's being handled. Perhaps the golden days will never return for our children and grandchildren up there.

Back in the late 70's someone(s) in the Squaw Mountain Ski Club came up with the idea that Squaw Mountain at Moosehead Lake should elect a mayor. A good will ambassador and all that to welcome skiers one and all to "Friendly" Squaw Mountain. An old ski buddy, Bill Rice remembers it well. He and friends gathered up all the poster paper available in Greenville. They got an "artist" to paint the posters, and then began plastering them on lift poles, telephone poles, ski huts, the lodges and even in Greenville itself. Skiers were rallied to get in on the campaign. In the end there was no doubt. Otis Bacon was the overwhelming winner. He and his wife Kay, who was always by his side, were so well loved and thought of, there was never another election. He held the title for life. Old number one, the mayors chair, on special occasions and some not so special, would stop while Otis and Kay were seated, then carried, waving and smiling to the top.

Those were the golden years at Squaw. Skiing was very much on the rise. Lift rates at Squaw were probably the most reasonable in the state, considering terrain and fall line. Families would pack up on Fridays, head up from the coast, down from Canada, and from inland to spend weekends and school vacations skiing and partying at Squaw, Sugarloaf, Sunday River, Bridgton, and Saddleback. So secure did we feel in those days with everyone knowing each other that as soon as the kids could handle the lifts we'd let them go. Often we'd just be catching glimpses of them during the day racing down the mountain. End of the day we'd all gather in the lodge for Après Ski, laugh and talk over the day's runs and falls and be thankful for another day and no broken bones.

Otis and Kay were the personification of those good times, the golden years. Who could ever forget racing hell-bent for leather down one of those trails, could be any time of the day, come around a corner and there'd be Otis and Kay passing out hot cider, hot chocolate, cookies, chowder or whatever they'd wrangled from the lodge kitchen that day. Had to stop. Otis wouldn't let you go by. And to partake of this welcome nibble, one only had to repeat Otis's mantra, "Friendly Squaw Mountain."

The Bacons and their large family lived in the Greenville area up on East Outlet where Otis served for more than thirty years as Chief Engineer controlling the Kennebec River for the Kennebec Water Power Company. He retired in 1984.

There are those people among us of whom a great part of their lives are given to helping and bringing cheer to others. Otis with Kay were/are those people, those bright lights that touch us and make our lives the better for it. Otis had a special way about him. I doubt that he met few people in his lifetime that didn't quickly count him as a friend and no less a friend that could be called on in a time of need or personal crisis.

Exuberance. He exuded exuberance. Telling a story, making a point. He'd wear that wall to wall grin and his right fist with index finger extended would be waving up and down, occasionally slamming into the left open palm for emphasis. He'd go right on and on, tending at times to leave his friend the listener with no place to go but believe. Hailing from Sydney, not so distant from "Augusty" Kay and Otis entertained many a senator and representative, their home a home away for those spending the winter weeks at legislative duties. Quiet legend.

Upon graduation from college, WWII was in full swing. For health reasons Otis couldn't enlist, he was 4F. True to his nature he found a way to do his part. Volunteered for a general electric program researching the effects of cold on Army/Air Force pilots. Otis some time into the program suffered a severe case of frostbite. Summarily told he was no longer needed he was released from the program. Thank you very much, no compensation. Otis endured great pain and health complications for the rest of his life. Again, true to his nature I never heard him complain and he never let it become a handicap.

Perhaps my fondest memory of Otis was on a Kennebec River rafting trip. We'd finished the delightful steak dinner cooked over open fire by the outfitters and later were lazily paddling along down the deadwater reflecting on the morning's moments of sheer terror through the rapids. I looked slightly upriver and there comes Otis, laid back in his life jacket, wearing his glasses, big grin on his face, waving to all, wearing his brown leather shoes hoisted as high as could be in the air as if to not get them wet.

We're gonna miss Otis. He died February 5, 2008, age 87, at his other home in Greenville from complications of a broken hip. Happened in the dark, very early morning hours. Kay said he lay on the floor for more than an hour not wanting to get the ambulance folks out of bed that time of night. Friend, mentor, raconteur, politician, neighbor, legend...

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For the accompaniment where the starch needs a personality of its own.

Cumin Scented White Rice

3 tablespoon vegetable shortening	2 bay leaves
1 garlic clove, minced	2 cups long grain white rice
1/2 small onion diced	2 1/2 cups water
1 teaspoon cumin seed	1 teaspoon salt

Sauté vegetables 5 minutes in shortening. Add cumin and bay leaves. Allow to sauté 2 minutes or until fragrant. Add rice, stir. Then add water and salt. Bring to simmer. Cover. Cook on low 18 minutes. Let stand covered 10 minutes. Then fluff rice.

Last month I must have left out the cooking temperature for the Salsa Lasagna, or figured everyone would know. I tried 425 degrees for 15 minutes, then 375 degrees for 30-40 (till done).

Fair winds and good roads.

Lee S. Wilbur